

INEXHAUSTIBLE

CUP

BY

IVAN

SHMELOV

Ethel Levery

PG 3476 S5 N413 1928

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INEXHAUSTIBLE CUP

Ivan Shmelov has also written
THE SUN OF THE DEAD
Published by E. P. Dutton & Company

INEXHAUSTIBLE CUP

By

IVAN SHMELOV

Author of "The Sun of the Dead," etc.

Translated from the Russian

BY

TATIANA DECHTEREVA FRANCE



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PREFACE

(From a Letter)

A CREATION of art, if it really deserves this distinction, must speak for itself to the reader. If it is not art, if it is not the creation of a living spirit . . . it does not deserve to be spoken about!

Happily I can restrict myself to a few words with reference to the "Inexhaustible Cup" without writing about the book itself.

I was writing this poem, I allow myself to call the book thus, during a difficult time of my life, the summer of 1918, when I left Moscow, not my own old Moscow but one already captured by the evil force! I came to Crimea in the hope of finding there conditions, even though meager ones, for literary work and life. I had no thought of the "Inexhaustible Cup." And somehow it came to be written. I had not a single book with me but the New Testament: all my library remained in Moscow and perished there. I do not know why the "Inexhaustible Cup" is a still book, as I feel it now and as the critics and best readers note—while everything around was fomenting and thundering. It may be the soul yearned for tenderness, quietness, purity when everything around was so stern, almost to cruelty, so agitated and noisy, so bloody and tumultuous. It may be, in the deeps, the soul sensed with that indefinable feeling which guides the creating mind, a struggle for the pure and eternal.

The civil war went on—Whites against Reds, the Godless Communists, a struggle for the Fatherland, for the holy that was desecrated—and is there anything more holy for man than the Fatherland?

And for this holy thing, our Russian youth,

the most pure, the very best of it, the very best there was in the Russian Intelligentsia was struggling, sacrificing, gathered under the White banners, unsurrendering to this day, working now in the mines and factories of Europe and the whole world. Our clear youth is bearing in its soul its own "Inexhaustible Cup," its own ideal, a beautiful Russia, its own Anastasía, pure, tender, quiet, loving in the deeps, suffering in secret, submissive to her fate, its own Inexhaustible. . . .

And the time will come. They will find her! Her image is holy, imperishable, an inexplicable image to be comprehended only by the supersensing soul.

And now I wish to give this still poem to the Russian youth who passed through every trial, who rose above everything personal in order to sacrifice to her, the beloved, like my simple hearted Ilia.

And, not only to these my own pure youth, but I would give it to all youth, which is destined

to guide and renew life, to all fresh youth for whom the sky is not yet dimmed, to whom is not yet lost the imperishable image—the beautiful image—the ideal of purity and perfection for man. Now, in our tumultuous time, when many ideals are lost and many tarnished—it is supremely important to love self-forgetting and to create the beautiful which must be in life, but which is constantly waning—the clear human soul—in her heights near to Divinity, inexhaustible and fathomless in her spiritual wealth—to lead her up . . . to sanctity.

This is all I can say about the "Inexhaustible Cup." But I say it now. Then I thought about nothing.

IVAN SHMELOV.

July, 1927 Cape Breton Seashore

FOR THE TRANSLATOR

THE translator has asked me to write a word to commend this book to American readers.

The translation was a work of love by one who had faith that this book bears a spiritual message for America. This faith I share.

Shmelov dedicates his book, first, to those Russian youths who have so heroically suffered for their country, those defeated but inconquerable ones in whose soul burns a deathless love for Russia, and, then to all youth everywhere, upon whom depends the destiny of the world.

But such a true work of art can be given to no class or age. It becomes at once a universal and timeless possession.

Russia, in spite of more than a century of

closer contact with the West, remains comparatively unknown. The pictures of her master-painters are unseen. The masterpieces of her revealing literature are, for the most part, unread and, hence, we are poorer. Russia has for the world a spiritual mission of profound significance, an exalting influence and power which we need. In Russia, religion is a reality. It may be that, yet again from this East, must come that renewed revelation and spiritual quickening which the "more practical" men of the West need that they may be turned, from an over emphasis of the material life, God-ward.

In this book we have a colorful, refreshing picture of a strange, far distant time and land, painted with the boldness and brilliance of a master hand. Yet, as was the foreign country to its hero Ilia, here is for us a land alien but still our own, for in it we feel that warm heart throb of all humanity, the finite of man intensely yearning for the Infinite of God.

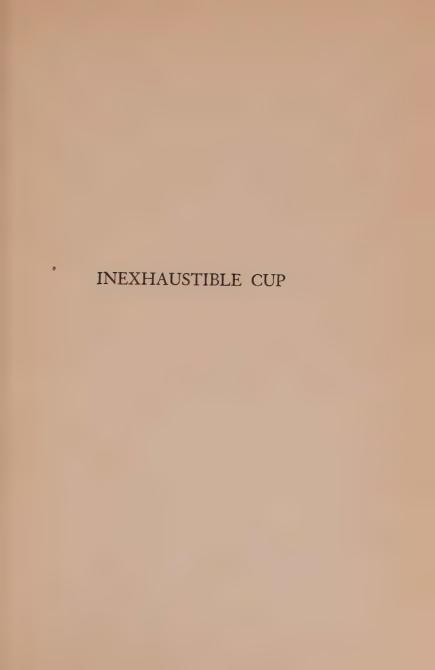
Here, in exquisite setting, we have the life story of a simple peasant, struggling, suffering, yet steadily, sternly mounting, grade by grade, through toil, agony, self-abnegation, ever upward, God-ward, until, at last, the very gates of heaven seem ajar, the perfect harmony of God audible and the purified soul becomes fit instrument for the Divine.

We see the hard life and lowliness of the peasant folk in the time of serfdom: lord and serf; palace and hut; the gaudy colors of the village with its fair; the pettiness and fleshliness of the proud in spirit and the greatness and Godliness of the humble ones.

The hero, Ilia, becoming a church painter, at last reaches that holy solitude, to which the impure may not penetrate, that sacred place where God allows those, who have come up out of great tribulation and have overcome, to sense more clearly His ineffable beauty and love that, thus inspired, they may reveal.

Ilia's soul ascended until he knew, in truth, that he who loses life shall find it, and then, in his devotion and inspiration he beheld, and through him was painted, the Virgin holding Christ the Lord, conceived and portrayed as He was, is and shall forever be the "Inexhaustible Cup."

JOSEPH IRWIN FRANCE.





INEXHAUSTIBLE CUP

SUMMER cottagers from the village Liapunovka and nearby places, enjoy taking their guests to the estate, Liapunovka itself. Young girls, entranced, say: "A wonderfully romantic place; all in the past! And there is a woman, a marvelous beauty . . . from the Liapunov family, many legends are current about her!"

True, everything is in the past in Liapunovka. Visitors stand in a sad enchantment on the damp banks of a large, full-watered pond that reflects, mirror-like, the stone dam, century old lime trees and stillness; listen to the cuckoo in the depths of the park; stare at the green stones of the jetty with a submerged boat filled with tad-poles, and try to imagine how it was here before. It would be good to stroll to the island, now with rasp-

berries everywhere, and in spring, the nightingales sing there in the wild berry thickets. But the planks of the little bridge are broken in the middle and the handrail rotten. Some one starts singing with an unsteady tenor: "Against my will I'm drawn to those sad shores" . . . and, of course, he is interrupted: "Let's go and have tea!"

Tea is served in the cattle-yard, among the nettles and the burdocks, on a little mown spot. Complete desolation—the stone barns without roofs, elderberries peeping in the gaps.

"One bull remained!"

They look—they laugh. On the single post of the gate a dried bull's head remains. The guard lives in the adjoining two windowed cottage.

He brings a fragment of the past—a mutilated green samovar vase—and he says invariably: "This is the cattle-yard! But there ain't no cream."

They laugh at him; always disheveled,

puzzled, seeming to have lost something. And now for the fifth month his salary has not come.

Winking, feigning astonishment, a frequenter inquires. "And the suit of the master is still going on?"

"For the twenty-second year the suit runs on . . . the lord who married the Polish woman and others coming in . . . and Katherina Mitrevna. It's nothing to me . . . but without her, it cannot be."

And again, everybody laughs—even the barns with their empty stone bellies.

They go to see the mansion. It looks into the park—into the wide avenue, with a black Flora in an empty flower bed. The mansion is not high but long, hoof-like, with short pillars and huge windows in the front, suggesting a hot house. Some say "Empire" and some "Baroque." They ask the guard: "And maybe Roccoco?"

"And how do I know? It may be she."

They enter with laughter. They pass through suites of rooms; banquet rooms, card rooms, ball rooms, drawing rooms—all in the greenish half-light of the park. At them look dumbly Korelean birch, mahogany, cupboards, giant curved sofas in the corners, twisted legs, bellied drawers, tarnished bronze, mirrors, sleeping in dust, tired out by centuries of reflection. In the dust, with their fingers, young folk scrawl their names: Anuta, Kostia. . . . They glance at the portraits . . . Toupees, stiff collars, bulging eyes, polished noses, wigs—boredom.

"Here is the beauty!"

For her portrait the mansion is visited.

"And what eyes!"

The portrait is in a gilded oval frame. A very young woman, in severe black gown, with marvelous hair of reddish chestnut. A thin pale face, large blue eyes, in a joyful tremor: something springlike shimmering in them, as after the storm the new sky—a hushed delight of an awakening

womanhood. And impulse, and something childishly naïve, that cannot be put in words.

"A joyful girl-queen!" someone will say, repeating the words of a poet, who had wandered here.

They stand for a long while and, at last, every one agrees that in the lengthened eyes, in the corners of naïvely half open lips—there are bitterness and lurking suffering.

"A second uncomprehended Mona Lisa," some one will say, of course.

Men—arrested in a fleeting wistfulness—in thoughts of unfulfilled happiness . . . women—silenced . . . and to many, for a moment, their lives seem dreary.

"A secret" . . . the guard is eager to convey . . . scratching his back with his fist . . . "Looking at every one at once."

Again they laugh and the enchantment is lost. The secret is known to them. They change positions. Yes, she looks.

8

"And another secret about the emperor. There on the back it is wrote."

The guard slaps his bare, dirty feet on a stool, takes the portrait from the nail, holds it high as if for a benediction, and drums with his fingers: "Read!" And all start to decipher, in half voices, a carton label written with a painstaking hand, starting with a red letter:

"Anastasía Liapunova of the family Visfiatov. Born May 23rd, 1833. Died March 10th, 1855. An excerpt from the records of the family of Vishatov, page 24: 'At the ball of the nobility of St. Petersburg the August Monarch deigned to pause before this youthful maiden filled with tender charm. He was especially struck with her eyes and he deigned to say: 'Maintenant c'est l'hiver, mais vos yeux, ma petite, reveillent dans mon coeur le printemps.' And the following morning an aide-de-camp came to her father, a

¹ It is winter now but your eyes, my little one, awaken the spring in my heart.

second Major of the guard, Paul Afanasievich Vishatov, and delivered an invitation, to the palace, to him, together with his daughter Anastasía. Oh, how grievously was the head of the noble family stricken by this monarchical grace! He, the second major Vishatov, perceiving the bitter lot which awaited his only child, now and hereafter, and the family shame, which by many, would not have been taken for shame at all, displayed an insolent disobedience, praiseworthy under those circumstances, and in strict secrecy, left, in the same hour, with his daughter for his far distant estate, Vishata-Temnoe'."

The guard hangs the portrait. Everybody is silent. Untold to the end—the poem is interrupted. The glimmering, unbelievable eyes look, wishing to say, "Yes, there was . . . and there was much. . . ."

They pass to the church beyond the park. They glance at the frescoed walls, said to be the work of a serf peasant. Yes, not bad, especially the Last Judgment; all local country types, clad, almost, in Zipuns.1

"Look! She again! In the sepulchre! In 1905² lads broke open the crypts and threw out the bones."

They enter in the moist twilight with rainbows from the stained windows. They contemplate the reconstructed graves with defaced epitaphs. One was left unmolested, a monument with a medallion cut upon it: her portrait, a smaller copy; the same joyfully splashing eyes.

"Our lads have broke the tombs," the guard says indifferently.—"Trying to reach the 'Beast,' so he was nick-named by the old folk. They were not allowed to molest this one. She lived a holy life, so the old folks said."

The guard knows no more.

They contemplate the velvety blackness of the sepulchre—the painting—an angel of death,

² Simple peasant garb.
² Year of the first revolution in Russia.

black-winged, with a stern face, spreading over the ceiling, bending to her head-stone; white, life-like lilies faintly appearing on the walls.

All is seen. One may take leave. The guard does not show the grave at the north side of the church. In the juicy grass lies a boulder stone overgrown with velvety mildew. One can hardly read on it the curved letters: "Here lie the remains of a former serf peasant, Ilia¹ Sharonov." His name faintly appears in the corner of the portrait. It may be the guard really does not know about him. Very few in the neighborhood do know about him.

The church in Liapunovka is named after the prophet Ilia. From three villages people flock to it and, on its altar day,² even from Vishata-Temnoe, fifteen miles away. The ancient sub-deacon, Kapluga, one hundred years old, comes then. He lives in the convent of the nuns, Visoko-Vlad-

¹ Russian for Elias.

² The day of the prophet Elias.

ichny, the refuge for old people, named after Anastasía. For one hundered miles around there is none older than he. The mujicks even call him Methuselah. And when going to church, on the day of the prophet Ilia, they drive him on the cart of hay. They know from him about ancient times. Much he remembers: How the church was rebuilt; the wedding of Anastasía Pavlovna with the Lieutenant of the guards, Sergey Dimitrievich Liapunov; such fire-works there were on the ponds, and the sub-deacon Kapluga quite well remembers how the church was painted by the master of church painting, the serf lad Ilushka: "In foreign lands he studied, but the rudiments I taught him."

And about the "Beast," the father of Sergey Dimitrievich, Kapluga knows; and how the master of painting lived in the small cottage in the barnyard and how he died; and about Anastasía Pavlovna, of blessed memory, and he calls her a

saint; and about Vishata-Temnoe from where she was taken. "And Saint George on the wall . . . Oh! And that 'Serpent' . . . God have mercy . . . I saw it myself but it was not spoken of in those times."

Behind the river Nirlia, side by side with the estate Vishata-Temnoe, is spread the convent Visoko-Vladichny, white walled, flattish, an ancient abode that, with its cross and walls protected the land from cruel nomad invaders. Now it is the convent. On the east wall of its cathedral a bright knight, on a white horse, with eyes like stars, stabs with a spear a serpent in black armor, with a man's head,—only the tongue, the teeth and the jaws those of an animal. Amongst people it is said that the serpent's head is that of the "Beast."

Many tales are told about Liapunovka but the only trust-worthy ones are those told by Kapluga. He read what Ilia Sharonov wrote himself, in a

fine hand, in a booklet of Italian paper. On the eve of his death Ilia, himself, handed the booklet to the sub-deacon.

And this he said: "Anisich, you taught me writing . . . to you I give my writing."

The sub-deacon guarded the booklet, but when they started to transport the ikon "Inexhaustible Cup" from the dining hall to the cathedral, he became troubled in his spirit and transmitted it secretly to the Mother Superior. And Kapluga says that even until now the booklet is preserved, under seals, in an iron trunk in the chamber of the Mother Superior. The Bishop knew about it and ordered:

"Keep it for future guidance. To avoid temptations do not proclaim it now. There are a thousand ways for God's Grace and the people thirst for joy."

A learned, clever man that bishop was and he knew well the wistfulness of the human heart.

This is what was told by those who read:

I

ILIA was the only son of a peasant serf, Tereshka, a wood-work painter, very skilful in his line, attached to the lord's household, and Lusha, the gentle one, a serf woman. Ilia did not know his mother. She died when he was not one year old. A lowly barn woman Agafya, the "crosseyed," his aunt, took charge of him and he lived in the barnyard with cattle. No attention was paid to him—under God's Eye. The pigs trod on him; the cattle kicked him. And once a bull caught him under the shirt with his horns and tossed him into the nettles. But God's Eye guarded, and in his early years Ilia started to help his father. He ground the colors. He even painted the veneers. He was a beautiful, rosy boy, like a rich apple, and he resembled a girl in the delicacy of his face and in his eyes. And, because of his comeliness, the old lord took him to his chambers—to fill and serve the pipes. And

it happened once that Ilia, in haste, hitting a chair, broke the lord's favorite pipe, on which was represented a naked woman into whose hips the lord himself used, grunting, to stuff tobacco and the tyrant ordered that he be given a salt whip in the stables. The lord said: "You will learn, cur's pup, where a broken pipe leads."

Then Ilia fled in fear and shame to his aunt in the barnyard and hid in secret, even from her, behind the straw in the stalls, supping on the pigs' swill. But he did not escape punishment and again was put in attendance with the pipes.

People called the lord, "Beast." He was tall, fat and lustful. All the attractive lassies had passed through his bed-chamber. He was born that way. And, after he had married off his daughters and sent his son into the service, he became like a Turkish sultan. His house was filled with girls. There were even under-aged ones. Ilia remembered how once the carpenter, Ignashka, rushed at the lord with a shoe-maker's

knife, but missed him and was sent to the galleys. The lord started to lose strength.

Ashamed and sorrowful Ilia looked upon such acts but, in accordance with his duty, he served the lord incessantly. The lord even commanded him to walk naked and seem gay. From shame, he closed his eyes. The lord then ordered him to grimace indecently while he himself sat in a chair smoking a pipe.

Ilia was then twelve years old.

Once, in summer, the lord went to inspect the mill on the Protochka river,—the mill race was flooded. The lord left the house seldom, so Ilia for a long time was musing how he could go to the convent to pray—waiting a chance. And now, not telling his father or the old house-keeper, Fefeliha, in shame and fear, he ran toward Vishata-Temnoe to the Visoko Vladichny convent. Often he had heard in the house and from passing people that comfort was given there.

After the liturgy he remained in the church alone and began to pray, before a golden ikon, adorned with ribbons. He did not know the ikon's name. An old nun approached him and asked caressingly:

"What is your grief, little boy?"

Ilia cried and told her his grief. Then the nun took him by the hand and told him to pray thus: "Protect me, guard me, Immaculate Virgin," she herself standing by his side, praying. "And now leave. God be with you. Eat the holy prosvirka and you will be strengthened."

From a bag she gave him the Holy Bread, blessed him with the sign of the Cross and led him out of the church. And Ilia's heart became light.

All his way, fifteen miles, through the pine forest, he walked gaily, plucking blackberries and singing songs. And some one went with him through the shrubs, singing also—it prob-

ably was the echo. And he did not think at all that the lord had returned and was clapping his hands, calling. As he neared the fish-traps on the river, Lubka, the crooked-eyed,—whose eye the lord had gouged out, when trying to hook her from beneath the staircase where she crouched from him,—sprang upon him from the bushes, clasped his neck, she all a-quiver, "Ilushechka, darling, beauty! Our damned 'Beast' was drowned at the mill-race—not by his will. A rider, rushing past to the village, shouted it to me."

She whirled him about, as if frenzied, and kissed him. Ilia rejoiced in his heart, but told no one of his prayers.

God had weighed the tears of his slaves on the scales of His Truth and chastized the tyrant with an untimely death.

All his life, Ilia saw in dreams the old lord: muzzy, bald, with eyes up-rolled, in a bespittled morning robe, his breast shaggy as a bear's, his feet hairy. All his short life, Ilia repeated, when his heart was burdened, the nun's prayer.

II

The young lord, the Lieutenant of the Guards, Sergey Dimitrievich, came into power. He arrived from St. Petersburg—in the time of the old lord he had seldom come—and arranged a chase with hounds which was the marvel of all. The old lord lived like a bear. He did not associate with his neighbors; but the young lord hurried feast after feast. He summoned singers and trumpeters; erected on the island a "pavillion of love" and swung a bridge. Swans floated on the pond.

And Ilia went again to his father's work. He decorated the pavillion with bunches of flowers and naked children with arrows—Cupids. His work was not inferior to his father's.

The young lord was kind; he did not like to flog. Instead he said, "I wish, foolish folk, to teach you writing: learning is light!"

He summoned the young sub-deacon Kapluga and a deacon out of service, a drunkard without a nose—his nose sunk,—and ordered them to cram the whole household with learning. "The Noseless One" cut a rod from a chestnut tree and reached with it the bald pate of the farthest old man, who was quite toothless. The old folk cried in one voice imploring the lord to relieve them. And the Noseless One reached with his rod and mumbled: "Don't envy the lord's lot. The lord's learning is the torture of tortures."

The studies were abandoned: the "Noseless One" was found under the bridge of the Protochka river near a hole in the ice. It was said that, being tipsy, he fell.

But Ilia learned from Kapluga to read the scriptures fluently, and secular books. And he learned to write and to count perfectly. The lord came to make note of the progress. And he presented to Ilia, for his diligence, stuff for a shirt, a new hat for winter and a coin of copper to be spent at the fair, held by the convent, on the day of the Nativity of the Virgin.

So memorable, to Ilia, was that first copper coin!

He bought at the fair a handful of hard sweets, a measure of ginger cakes and a hatful of blue and yellow turnips. Following the Cross-bearing throng he crawled thrice under the ikon. He ate to full satisfaction the "schee," savored with salmon, prepared by the nuns in the convent. He listened to the blind singers and stared at the bear with a ring in his nostrils. To the hour of his death, Ilia remembered that clear frosty day, the sorb-apple trees, loaded with bunches, by the convent gate, and the fluffy dahlias on the ikons. And when he was re-

¹ Cabbage soup; a national dish.

turning with the folk through the pine forest, boldly the forest responded to the gay, reckless voices of the lads and lasses. They were singing a rambling song, calling one another. It was a loud, forbidden song to be sung only in the forest.

They were singing, asking, calling one another.

"Why the tempest and the blizzard sweep along? Why is not every trail buried by the snow? One trail the blizzard does not take. Which is the trail the blizzard does not take? The one paved with stones, with roots and dried grass.

Oh, tell us, show us, forest wood? The very trail running to the lord's house."

Ilia rejoiced, bringing up with second voice, taking full breath—presently they would strike up all in unison: all the forest a-throb with it.

"Let none walk on it!
Neither drive nor walk on it.
Oi, blizzard-tempest sweep along.
Oi, lasses, uncoil your blond plaits!"

Ilia passed his sixteenth year that autumn.

Ш

THE time of high flood passed. Spring came—and in the convent they started to renovate the cathedral. The mother treasurer of the convent, who was going about the neighborhood, came, with an obeisance, to the lord and asked him to spare, for the works of delicate painting, the deft master Teresha Sharunov. The lord willingly accorded leave; a holy work.

Ilia's heart was inclined to the monastery life. Stillness enticed him: So good were the bells and their chiming.

The famous Carilloneur, Ivan Kuny, came to teach the ringing, and he had instructed the blind

Sister, Kikilia, well. She knew how to play "Still Light" on the slender bells.

It was time for Ilia's father to leave for his work at the convent and the lord too was making ready to leave for his estate on the steppes for the autumn hunt. Then Ilia took courage. He noticed that the lord went in the morning to the ponds to feed the swans. His favorite girl Sonka, "the big-eyed," followed him carrying a pot of millet porridge. Ilia approached them from the shrubbery and waited for a quiet moment.

The lord stood so gay on the shore by the stone jetty near the boats, painted by Ilia for promenading, throwing porridge to the white swans as they were clamoring joyfully with their white wings. There was such a radiance all around!

The lord was dressed in a red Chinese morning robe, with big-headed gold snakes upon it and on his head was a gold cap, shining like the sun. So he shone like an ikon. And the day was warm and gracious, full of spring light from

water and sky. The island was white, as if in snow, all in wild cherry bloom. The woodworkers, on the little bridge, were tapping with bright axes, covering the boards with white birch.

Ilia heard how the lord said joyfully, "The swan is the bird of the gods, Sappho. Do remember this. They are full of nobility and beauty. Remember this. Strike the strings."

Ilia rejoiced. He knew the lord must be in a good humor today, if speaking with Sappho-Sonka, the "Big-Eyed."

Sappho stood all in white, like the maiden with doves on the ikon in the convent. The lord had ordered her to wear a white robe, uncoil her black hair on her shoulders, place a gold circlet on her head and on her feet boards tied with strings—sandals. He ordered her to whiten her ruddy cheeks and to place shadows beneath her eyes with charcoal. Clad that way she became quite new, like the pictures in the house. Ilia

loved to look at her; she resembled a saint. A harp, like King David's, was slung over her shoulder. She was the most beautiful of all. A passing hunter wished to buy her from the old He offered five thousand rubles. Spiridoshka, the cook, her father, had told this. The old lord did not need her, being quite weak, but he did not sell her because she had such a beautiful body—he loved to sit and look. And when the young lord came into power he took her from the girls' room into his own suite, in a special position, and ordered her called Sappho. So they called her, flattering the new favorite, but among themselves, they started to call her the "Big-Eyed Owl." Even Spiridoshka, the cook, her father, handing her the lord's favorite dish, mutton tripe with porridge, said respectfully, "Do take the tripe, please, Sappho Spiridonovna," and then spat after her, screaming to Ilia, "You scab, what are you laughing at?"

Ilia stepped out upon the path to the pond and, at a distance, fell on his knees, He said, "My lord, do let me go to work with my father for the convent."

Ilia knew that the lord never turned at once, although hearing all. The lord fed the swans, wiped his hands on his morning gown and ordered Ilia to approach, saying: "Oh, it is you, grammarian?"—and he patted his head. "You are a handsome lad. Tell me, Sappho, do the girls like him?"

Sappho rolled up her eyes as the lord had taught her, advanced her foot and said in singsong, looking into the sky, "Oh, I do not know, my lord."

The lord was angered. Ilia feared that he would not let him go to the convent to work. The lord stamped and waved his hands and said:

"You fool, you must not say 'My lord' but

'My m-a-s-t-e-r.' Thus the Greeks spoke! Listen—'I do not know, Oh, my m-a-s-t-e-r.'— To work in the convent? Let us hear what Sappho will say."

Then Ilia looked beseechingly at Sappho, and his eyes were dimmed with tears. And again he feared because Sappho said once more: "Oh, let him, my lord."

The lord stamped even more.

"Oh! you, duck's fool, leave at once. Go and learn with Petrushka from my notes. No! Wait! repeat: 'Do let him go, Oh, my m-a-s-t-e-r' and strike the strings."

Ilia rejoiced. She said it smoothly, averting her head and strumming the harp.

"Now, go," said the lord. "Thank her for her good taste in manners for otherwise you would not have worked at the convent. To her you are obligated."

To his very death Ilia remembered that bright

morning with the swans and the poor silly Sappho-Sonka. Had she not repeated it correctly—everything would have been different.

IV

ILIA labored joyfully in the convent.

He came to love even more the beatific stillness, hushed voices, the holy faces on the walls. He sensed with his soul that there could be joy in life. Ilia had seen and sensed and endured himself much grief and tears and here no one spoke an evil word. Everything looked holy here; flowers and people, even the black dipper by the holy well, all bitten over, looked caressing and holy. Meekly played the sun on the ikons' gilding, quietly the crimson lights of the lampads were flickering . . . and when, beneath the dark arches of the small cathedral, a nun with a high, crystal-clear, virginal voice appealed "Lead out of prison my soul"; Ilia's soul responded and sweetly yearned.

Master painters from the village Holuia, experts in the old traditional ikon painting, were re-decorating the cathedral.

The old Arefy, the chief of the guild, took Ilia to his heart for his comeliness and gentle disposition. He watched how Ilia worked with the slender brushes and sketched with the charcoal, and marveled.

He said: "But, brethren, where did he get his training?"

And he showed to Ilia, joyfully, how to prepare the grounding, how to put in the contour and how to measure the faces, exclaiming joyfully, "But, brethren, doves, do look at the miracle of God. He knows it as well as I do."

The old Arefy marveled: what he showed him, Ilia seemed to know already.

After Ilia had worked a month Arefy entrusted him with the painting of the small images and garments on the large ones. He taught him the traditions:

"One may not use other for a saint. Do not put either cinnabar or other in the beard—there was no saint with red hair. Only Judas was red-haired."

Ilia learned how to paint the eye, to put the spot of light with the white, and without a compass, free-hand, to draw the halo. Arefy, from joy, made the sign of the cross: "But do look, brethren, he has golden fingers—he might become another Rublev. Oh, my lord, in the manor I have found a pearl," asserted Arefy and interrogated Tereshka, the wood-work painter. "But where did you get him from?"

Tereshka looked, smiling, "In his seventh year he was adorning the sleighs with peacocks' eyes and in his eighth he was painting a 'Barabesque' on the ceiling."

Nuns were coming, shaking their cowls, compressing their pale lips: "God's grace is upon him. He is fore-ordained."

Ilia looked timidly, thinking that Arefy spoke

thus out of pity. The work came to him with joy. What for the praise? He said to Arefy, "It is not hard in the least, nothing but joy."

Arefy was moved to tears, and to him, first, he revealed the great secret of untarnishing cinnabar: "You must take an egg, quite fresh, from under the hen. And when you grind this together with cinnabar, it must be in the dryest weather, not one cloud! When the sky is like the eye of God. Not a single drop of water,—God forbid!—and do not breathe upon the paint—tie up your mouth. And in your thought, repeat the prayer—'Stand beautiful, exult and rejoice, Jerusalem'."

And Arefy, himself, was muttering—singing—this short, joyful song of the church, while painting, in the faint light under the dome, the old God Jehovah, himself little and light as a moth.

He was very, very old, his eyes set in rays—wrinkles, and, looking at him, Ilia thought that

such were the old saints—Sergius and Sava, those especially honored by Arefy.

A guard's hut stood in the convent garden, the frame only—no planking—the posts covered by straw. The master painters were living in it, going only for meals to the dining hall of the convent.

During the first days of his work, while the apple trees were still in bloom, Ilia left the hut at sunrise. The garden was all white in the faint light of the awakening sun and the bird songs were good. So good it was that his heart brimmed over and Ilia cried for joy. He knelt down in the grass and prayed, as he knew, as Agafya, the barn woman had taught him. And when he had finished praying he heard a still voice, "Ilia!" and he saw a white vision as soapy foam or swirling water at the mill. Only for one moment was given to him this vision, but he saw eyes looking at him. In fear, he clung to the grass and lay so for a long time. Then he

heard Arefy calling to him, "What are you doing here?"

Ilia got up and told Arefy that he had seen eyes, such ones as nobody has.

"But what kind of eyes?" Arefy tried to inquire.

"I do not know, batushka, such eyes nobody has."

When squinting he could call them back but to explain—he could not.

"Severe as those of Saint Nicholas? Or as those of the prophet Elias?" Arefy, anxious, kept trying to interrogate.

"No! Different . . . one can see through them . . . and they seem to enfold the whole garden . . . clear eyes. . . ."

Arefy shook his head thoughtfully. He did not credit it—thinking that, after sleep, it had only seemed so to Ilia. But Ilia walked that day as if in a dream, fearing and rejoicing that he had a vision. He had heard the nuns reading in the dining hall, in the lives of the saints, there are visions for death or for obedience.

From that morning, Ilia resolved in his heart to serve God. Only he did not comprehend how.

Graciously they lived in the convent. Arefy spoke caressingly, calling all brethren and doves, coaxing the slack ones with laughter and merry sayings. He knew many graciously-joyful stories about the saints—those which are not to be found in any book. Why Nichóla has such severe eyes, those of October. Why Kassian has his name's day so seldom and why Ipaty is always painted with three wrinkles on his brow. All this was infused, with a gracious warmth, into Ilia's gentle heart.

Ilia asked Arefy: "And why were all the martyrs Greeks and Romans—and of our people—were there none?"

"Here we have, Czar Boris-Gleb—Ours! Metropolitan Philip . . . Dimitry-Tzarevich!"

"And peasant martyrs? What were they?"
"What were they? Just wait . . ." Arefy
tried to remember: the blessed ones, the quixotic
kind, the saint fathers, the stylites. . . .

He could not remember them all. Tereshka, the wood-work painter listened to him, laughing, "Paints, Uncle Arefy, would not suffice—so many of us . . . for this reason, we are not painted—and beside—our mugs—muzzles did not come out well!"

Arefy frowned, angry, "Do not joke about this, brethren."

August approached. In the garden the apples were reddening. The painters were concluding their work. Ilia's soul became sad. When, after their meals, the masters were sleeping, and everything was hushed in the convent stillness, Ilia used to go to the cathedral, to climb upon the scaffold, under the dome, where Arefy was completing his painting, Jehovah, with angels and white doves below the

clouds. There he sat in the cathedral stillness. Sunbeams—floods were streaming through the narrow grated windows, into the cathedral, from the walls saints and martyrs were watching severely. And once it occurred to Ilia. "They all have severe faces,—but how is it then, as I heard the nuns reading in the dining hall, that they all rejoiced in the Lord?" So Ilia deliberated. And suddenly the blood throbbed and resounded in his ears and his heart fluttered. He remembered that Arefy would be gone soon and he yearned to give him a joy before parting. Then, all in a sweet quiver, Ilia prayed to God Jehovah in the clouds and to the Evangelist Luke, the supreme master of ikon painting, and, remembering Arefy's precepts, shaped a pine tablet, put in the grounding—and his hands steadied. A week, in the after-meal hours, he worked secretly under the dome.

And then came the day of parting! Arefy was leaving, with his guild, and Ilia, with his

father, to their place. Ilia waited for the moment when only they two were on the scaffold and, in a tremor, with love, presented to Arefy the ikon of the reverend Father Arefy Pechorsky.

Arefy glanced at the ikon. Then, casting up his red eyes, with radiating wrinkles, exclaimed joyfully: "Ilia, you did it?"

"I" . . . Ilia said softly, lighting up with happiness, "to give you a joy, batushka, to make you remember me."

Then Arefy wept. And Ilia wept also. On the platform, under the dome, there was no one, only the hoary Jehovah in the clouds of glory. Arefy said: "Galubchick, but what have you done? Me, my ownself, you painted like the reverend father, me—a sinner. Oh, my Lord!"

Ilia made no response. Everything was painted according to the laws of church painting; the austere garb, the church with many domes and the cavern at the feet of the reverend father. All this Ilia extracted from Arefy by asking

what was the tradition of painting the saint of his name—his angel guardian. But he took Arefy's face, his high boned pink cheeks, his red eyes with ray-like wrinkles, and his hoary sparse beard.

Arefy showed it to his fellow masters: they

laughed—it was so much the living Arefy.

"This is a real church portrait," pensively said Arefy, "your way is not with us, Ilia, on a big sea must be your sailing."

The path of the painters now led to Murom and they went by Liapunovo through forests. Ilia made his way through the brush, plucking raspberries for Arefy, his heart anguished with the thought of parting. Arefy spoke in tears: "Oh, Lord! You reveal a great joy through a man. I cannot leave you this way, Ilia. I shall go and speak to your lord. I cannot leave you this way."

"My lord is far away," said Ilia.

And when, across the river Protochka, the

lofty Liapunovo appeared, with its ponds and the mansion, Ilia clung to Arefy and wept aloud. They stood silent for a moment and then Arefy said: "Your sailing, Ilia, should come to be on a big sea."

They parted, and never met again. The painters went to Murom.

V

In Autumn, the lord returned from the steppes and brought with him a gypsy girl, a black-brown fox.

Sappho-Sonka, who met him, was ordered to keep out of his sight and every one was ordered to honor the gypsy girl like a real mistress and to call her Zoia Alexandrovna.

This Zoika gypsy was swift, slight as a wasp, and wicked. When angered she whooped through the whole house, squealed like a cat and slapped girls in the face. She threw out from all the trunks ancient shawls, silks and velvets, scatter-

ing them through the house and hung them even on the walls. She tired out the old housekeeper, Fefelicha. Carts loaded with woolen stuffs, silks, damasks and other finery were coming from town and Zoika rolled on the floor, in ribbons, tinkling on a guitar. The people marveled, for she even slapped the lord in the face—she must have bewitched him.

Now a calamity came upon Ilia. The lord ordered him to wait on the table in full attire. Ilia had to wear a red jacket, green stockings, a white wig with a little plait, shoes with buckles and a muslin tie. When the gypsy saw him, she rolled with laughter: "The Marquis, a lousy one!"

And the lord started to call him this and the household folk and even the ragamuffins in the village were shouting, "Here, a lousy Marquis!"

Very hurtful to Ilia was that unintelligible word. He spent days in the waiters' room, crying in secret, remembering Arefy.

And now there came upon Ilia a more bitter temptation.

The lord left on a bear hunt for a whole week. Zoika dined alone, coming to the table in a red shawl, gulping down Rhine wine, glass after glass. Once, being in a drunken rage, she blazed at him with black eyes and ordered him to drink her health. Ilia never drank—fearing sin. And then Zoika tore off her red shawl, exposed herself to the waist and tied under her dark breasts a crimson ribbon, on which were strung gold coins, and fixed her black eyes on him. Ilia dropped his eyes to the floor—not to be tempted—and she pulled him by the hand and bewitched him with her snake-eyes. Ilia looked at her hot lips and in fear, ran away from temptation and Zoika laughed.

Then Ilia understood that a temptation had been sent him. He prayed to the Lord's Passion and was strengthened.

After dinner, snow began to swirl and soon

a blizzard roared out doors. Zoika shouted to Ilia to lay a fire in the biggest fireplace—the "Lion's jaws" and ordering him not to leave, locked him in the bed-chamber. Ilia understood that a new temptation was coming upon him and he knelt down and prayed to John of Kiev. And he heard, "Go away, Fefelicha, to the bath house."

Zoika entered the room and locked the door again. It became very hot in the room. Zoika rushed out bare-footed and naked, clasped Ilia by the neck from behind, but Ilia rebuked her. He seized a burning brand and thrust it into her naked breast. He heard a frantic squeal like a cat's and after this, he remembered nothing more. Recovering, he found himself sitting on the mattress in his little room, and out-doors the storm roaring in the black night. The old Fefelicha came laughing, "Our snake, tipsyheaded, has fallen on a fire brand and burned herself."

Ilia kept silent about it all and thereafter Zoika did not disturb him. The lord took her, at lent, to a fair and returned alone. She vanished, leaving no trace.

Then Ilia understood that Zoika, the gypsy, was sent to him as a temptation: to him and his lord.

After this, the lord became quiet. He did not even go hunting any more. But he ordered the big book-cabinet to be opened—Ilia could not recollect when it had been opened before—and started to read from morning to evening. Ilia also started to read and read eagerly. He learned many new things about life and people.

Suddenly the lord was quite changed. He summoned the tailor, Grishka, the "touseled-haired," and ordered him to make a hair-cloth. Grishka did not know what a hair-cloth was, and made a morning dress out of prickly stuff. The lord wore it next his skin, tying it with a rope. He said to Ilia:

"We must save our souls."

Then Ilia asked permission to wear a haircloth also. And they started to lead an austere life. The lord woke Ilia at night and ordered him to read the psalter while, he, himself, knelt down on a heap of oats and salt and remained so until morning.

Thus the lord prayed for two weeks. Ilia rejoiced, and suddenly it changed again.

It was at night. Ilia was reading from the psalm his favorite lines . . . "If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea. . . ." Then the lord screamed: "Stop, 'Marquis.' Go wake up everyone, summon the singing girls!"

Ilia understood that it was a new temptation for his lord and went on reading: "Even there shall thy hand." . . . But the lord screamed louder. Ilia awakened the singing girls. They gathered, in white veils like those Sappho used

to wear, and started to sing with sleepy voices, the lord's favorite song, "Venus."

The lord did not permit them to finish. He ordered dried plums to be given them and sent them away. He said: "I am disgusted with you, duck's heads. You do not know how to enjoy life. Because of you I get no joy. I shall go away from you to the brim of the world. Ilushka I shall take with me as a valet. Prepare for him a gray jacket with gold buttons. Now be gone!"

Ilia went to his little cell by the groom's room under the staircase and already had taken into his hand the ikon of Terenty, the martyr, which he was finishing to give to his father,—working secretly in the nights—when the door opened and the lord called: "Why this light?"

Ilia confessed, wih fear, his passion, telling the lord that he was thus working only in the night, in the day-time all duty. The lord took the ikon and saw that the martyr resembled the wood-work painter Tereshka;—lifting his hands he said:

"Fool, you do not understand that you are a genius! And also a rascal to portray Tereshka, the drunkard, as the Saint-Martyr Terenty."

He demanded to be shown what else Ilia had painted. He recognized Zoika, the gypsy, on a sheet of paper nailed to the wall. She was lying in a cavern like Mary of Egypt. He tore it from the wall and hid it under his hair-cloth. Then he recognized himself, sitting upon a high throne, with a crown. He screamed angrily: "I—with a crown?"

Ilia, trembling, fell upon his knees, asking pardon. But the lord was not angry. He extended his hand to be kissed and said mercifully:

"By God's will I was led here. This proves that I must give you a training. Peter the Great used to send simpletons to study across the seas, and I too shall take you to foreign lands. Let all know that, in Russia, there are genuises, even among serfs! Sleep and do not fear punishment."

Ilia rejoiced that things had turned out thus, because he had intended the painting for that of the Emperor Diocletian, the persecutor, with the martyrs, but had not time to complete it and to write the title.

VI

Spring came,—and the preparations for the lord's journey were still going on. The coachmen and smiths were arranging an extending carriage for the long journey. One could sleep and eat and stretch to one's liking in that extended carriage. It was called a landau.

Easter was sung. Spring was in full bloom. Around the pond all was becoming white with wild-cherry blossoms. Ilia bade farewell to every one. And by the pond he sat, and to the

horses said farewell. He ran to his aunt in the barnyard to have a cry with her before parting. His aunt, Agafya, comforted him-"The lord's will, you must submit to it." She gave him a little bundle, curd cheese for the long journey and five kopeks for a candle for the Saint Nicholas: in distant lands his relics are resting-maybe some one will happen to show where they are. He asked his father's blessings, and in tears, bade him farewell: the wood-worker, Tereshka, had been lying with a severe illness for the second month. His feet were paralyzed. He cried; never before had Ilia seen his father cry. He always laughed. And to Spiridoshka, the cook, he bowed very low, thanking him for his kindness. Spiridoshka used to give him pieces from the master's table. And to the churchyard he ran, to Kapluga. Kapluga said to him: "There is a supreme cathedral in a universal city, nominated Rome City, and in that cathedral sits the Pope of Rome, honored as Christ himself.

He orders every one to kiss his foot. Beware! Do not kiss that foot!"

Kapluga gave him a silver coin—for a candle at the tomb of Peter, saying: "He who puts a candle at the tomb of Peter will enter Heaven. For my teaching do me this service."

And Ilia ran to the convent. He managed the journey in one night. He prayed fervently at the matin service. And running back by the forest road, he said farewell to the forest. The forest seemed new to him in its fresh pine needles, in the white bloom of the snow-drop trees, the gayly greening nut trees. The nightingales of dawn were trilling in the ravine. To the nightingales he said farewell, and to the forest stream in the glen; and to the hawks in the sky. And Ilia seemed to hear the forest say, "You will return."

The lord ordered that the service be held in the church for "those setting forth." The burgomaster, Kozutop Ivanich, herded together the whole village for the seeing-off. The lord, after the service, declared to the peasants that he was not going away seeking joy, but because of a great sadness: he was pained to look at their dark lives, never seeing a merry face. "When I return, I shall erect for you a new spacious church. I shall train Ilia and he shall paint it for you. You will pray more light-heartedly."

He took for the journey the silly Sappho-Sonka, lest he might be bored. He ordered her to wear the gypsy's dress and a green mantilla, and so they started, escorted by horsemen to the main high road.

Strange county towns and villages were encountered and forests and cities, big and small. All this was new and joyful to Ilia. Showers and storms overtook them. The sun broiled them; the wind dried them. Ilia looked, day and night, from his place on the coach box—rejoicing. Up to the very frontier no calamity

befell them and the lord there released his guard, the athlete saddle-maker, Panfil, armed with a pistol. One thing happened which grieved Ilia very much: at the very frontier Sappho vanished, like a stone falling into the water. She went into the town to buy for the lord exceptional woolen stockings which all the passersby were praising—an old Polish dealer led her—and vanished. For three days they lived in that town, at the mayor's house, looking for her in all the gay places. But Sappho had vanished like a stone in the water. The lord said, "Let her be there, the cheat. I have known that those were her ways."

Ilia wept on the coach box, but afterward he remembered how Sappho was whispering into the ears of Panfil, the saddle-maker, and that he had found the old Polish dealer, and thought perhaps she had gone to the German land. He did not tell this to the lord; perchance, it might be better.

VII

Four years elapsed. Like a bright dream those four years were: the far distant Liapunovka was lost in it.

As in a dream—there was a new earth and a new sky, and brighter than anything was the new freedom which came unexpectedly: go where your eyes entice you.

Ilia saw the sea, the blue eye of earth, mountains, the breast of earth, and the universal city which is called the "Eternal One." Ilia saw and loved new people. They were foreign—and at the same time, his own. Unspeakably joyful spread before him God's world,—brimless largeness. And the stars above him were new. Flowers and trees—all was new. And above all this, a new sun.

Alien it was, unknown, but still his own: the soul clung to it. Ilia found even a new Arefy, hoary, swift, with the same high-boned pink

cheeks and with eyes set in rays. Only the real Arefy was slapping himself on the hips and exclaiming in sing-song, "Oh you, my dove!" While this one was seizing the shoulder and exclaiming, "Bravo, Russian Ilia."

Ilia came to know the flight of the soul, the stroke of her free wings and the inexhaustible sweetness of life. It was bounding, brimming over, playing: in the light of the new sun, in the sweet sound of the church organ, in the white lilies, in the calling, the ringing of the bells. It shone into his eyes from the walls of the cathedral, from the white sarcophagi and the priceless canvases of the treasuries.

Ilia came to know and to love new names: Leonardo, Michel-Angelo, Titian and Rubens; Raphael and Tintoretto. He came to know and to love old stones. They had grown into his young heart.

He studied a year in the City of Dresden with a Russian designer, Ivan Michailovich.

Ilia did not understand at the time how Ivan Michailovich, being a free man and missing his own land badly, could not return there. This man fondled him like a near one and often used to say, "Remember, Ilia, you were born of the plain people and the plain people you must serve. To your own heart listen."

Ilia did not understand how he could serve people. Afterwards he understood: he could serve by his work.

A year passed. The designer said to Ilia, "You can get nothing more from me. Your gift is great and your heart is inclined to religious painting. So I shall write to your owner. And my advice to you is this: Drop care for your owner and become free."

Then Ilia, astonished, said to him, "If I should surreptitiously desert my lord, how could I return to my land and serve my people? I shall wander then like a tramp. My lord brought me here with a purpose: completing my studies,

I should decorate the church. Thus I shall serve my native place."

Then the lord settled him in a painter's studio in Rome, under a master of the Vatican, Terminelli. Ilia worked with him three years.

He was a handsome lad, with a tender heart, and all his fellows came to love him. They were gay lads and did not like to sit in one place. They nicknamed Ilia "Fanchulla," which in Russian is: girl. And they used to take him against his will to dances at the inn, where beautiful black-eyed maidens assembled. But Ilia did not drink red wine and did not see the maidens home. His fellows marveled at him and the girls resented it. Only one of them, the quiet little Lucheska, who was selling flowers in front of the cathedral, pleased his heart, but he did not dare to tell her. Only once he asked her to sit for a moment and made a charcoal sketch of her on a piece of paper. His fellows laughed at him.

"All the same he has her alive in the sketch."

They asked Ilia, "Who are you, Ilia, and who is your father in your cold Russia?"

Ashamed to tell the truth, Ilia said, dully, "My father is a wood-work painter attached to a lord." And he was even more ashamed to speak untruth. And they, being all free, were looking forward as to how they would arrange their lives.

They asked Ilia, "And you, Ilia, will you return to Russia?"

He answered dully, "Yes, to Russia."

In his third year Ilia painted a church picture by order of the master cardinal. Terminelli slapped him on the shoulder and said "This Saint Cecilia is not inferior to that of the Vatican. She is better, Ilia. She is really—a Saint. No Ilia, you are not a slave."

Ilia dropped his head. This word had hurt him. The old Terminelli understood him, patted his shoulder and hastened to add, "I wished to say that you are not borrowing from others, you are yourself."

And Ilia saw later on how they were sending the picture to the cardinal and in the right corner was standing a black signature: "Terminelli."

At the end of his third year Terminelli started to give him the profitable work of decorating the ceilings and the walls in the villas around the town: three hundred lira he earned in one week from a wine merchant and another two hundred, from a butcher, for whom he painted a Madonna. They were vehemently praising his work. Then Terminelli said, "You are ready. Now you can put your name on your work. Ilia, do not go to Russia. People there are savage. They understand nothing."

"For this reason, I wish to go there," Ilia said. Surprised, Terminelli said, "Here you will be rich and there they might kill you with a whip, like a slave." Then Ilia looked at Terminelli and said vehemently, "Yes, they might. But there if I paint a Saint Cecilia they will rejoice, and no hand, with a whip, will be uplifted against me. And on my work my name will stand—'Ilia Sharonov.'"

Terminelli understood and was ashamed. He brought him five hundred lira but Ilia did not take them.

Terminelli said: "You are a slave but proud. It will be very hard for you under your lord. Remain! I shall pay you the highest salary."

But Ilia did not wish any salary. Yearning for his native land was tormenting him. Everything joyful and bright was in the warm land where he now lived. For three years he had not heard a rude word or address. He had not seen one tear and he thought—what a happy land this was! He listened to many gay songs; sung in the streets, in the square, on the country roads, in the gardens, in the fields. They sang every-

where. On some holidays, they sang and tossed flowers. And, after the religious procession—Ilia saw it more than once—they were liberating pure doves, burning fires and firing guns—rejoicing.

But even more his soul was drawn toward his native land.

There was a great quantity of flowers around—white and pink gardens Ilia saw in spring; and white lilies, the still flowers of the martyrs and little violets and the sweet smelling white acacias, almonds and peaches and the odorous sweet flowers of orange and lemon trees, and great quantities of various colored roses.

But in spring, almost to anguish, his soul was drawn toward his native land.

Ilia remembered the quiet April garden in the spring-time, the dear white hazel trees, the wild-berry tree, as if swept over by snow and the spready sorb-apple trees adorned with berries. He remembered the blue-bells in the forest clearing, the waxen candles of the Lubka, and the scarlet eyes—stars of the sticky smolianka and the fluffly dahlias, with which one adorns the Life-giving Cross. He remembered the snow-drifts, the roads in the blizzards and the icy sheds on the pines. He remembered the rumble in the autumn forests, the creak and the crunch of the sleighs in the fields, and the voice of the frost in the timber, sonorous and resounding like a bell. The spring storms in the clear fields and the caressing rainbow, dear from childhood.

From beyond a thousand miles Ilia saw the poor church, and the rich cathedrals soaring into the sky did not entice him. He remembered the humble porch of his church, the beaten tin font and the wooden ikons, in tarnished ribbons, the bases all kissed over. Dusky faces were looking from a thousand miles, touseled heads did not leave his memory. In the night Ilia awakened, after a dream of his land and yearned in lonely thoughts.

He received two letters from his lord: commanding him to come for the work. Then Ilia began to hesitate; now he had a new soul, he would not be able to endure what he had endured before and what the other dark people endured. He was postponing the day of his departure.

Terminelli called him once more and unsettled him, telling of a rich work, inviting him to join in work on the villa of a prince.

"Ilia," he said severely, "You are an ungrateful man. The King of Naples will see your work. You are a mad man, Russian Ilia. I shall advance you a thousand lira a month. Think it over. I pledge you my word that there will come a time when you will paint the portrait of the Holy Father, the Pope himself. This honor comes seldom."

Ilia, troubled in his soul, said, "Give me time to think."

Then it happened that Ilia had a dream.

He saw the convent Visoko Vladichny, with the gardens, as if he were looking on the hill through the forest; people thronging from the convent with the church banners. Then Ilia descended the hill and went with the people, singing Easter songs. Following the old ikon he passed into the cathedral, and now the people vanished. And in a tremor Ilia saw the naked walls; with his eyes he saw the crumbling plaster; heaps of rubbish on the ground; the niches of the ikons. Abomination—and desolation. Ilia wept and said in grief: "Oh, Lord! Who did it?" He received no answer. Then he lifted his head to the Old God Jehovah and saw, on an unsteady board, an old father with a brush. He asked him, "Who desecrated this sanctuary?" The old father said: "Come, Ilia, nobody desecrated it, but we are putting new frescoes by the word of God." Then Ilia thought he must take brush and palette and tell them that they must call Arefy to the work, the workers

being few. . . . He started to sing joyfully: "Stand Beautiful, Exult and Rejoice."

Then he woke up. Waking, he heard how he sang in tears. His eyes were wet. He said firmly: "I shall go home. This was an indication for me."

And he declined the distinguished work.

He went in the evening to a little old church in the outskirts, by the muddy Tiber, which somehow suggested the church of his home. Often he used to go there and stand through the evening service, admiring the fresco on the wall: "The Last Resurrection." And today he stood, before the Virgin in the niche, sorrowful and troubled, asking: Must he go? And he heard an exclamation: "Pax vobiscum."

These words "Peace to you," Ilia accepted as a leave. Going out of the church he met an old lame man with a bucket and a brush. Remembering his father he thought: This is also a sign for me.

He gathered together his acquisitions and at the end of March, it was spring blooming—he started his way to the ship. He remembered the words of Arefy: "On a big sea must be your sailing."

And he was strengthened.

VIII

At the trading town, which is called Genoa, he went on board a big ship with sails spread. Her name was Letitia. This name meant joy. And this name also Ilia took for a good sign.

That ship was carrying a joyful load: coloured Venetian glass; fine lace; velvets and silks; ginger, sweet dates and mountains of baskets with fragrant oranges. Black Greeks and gay Italians were the sailors on it, singing songs, rejoicing at a favorable wind. The ship was gathering the wind with full sails, with white swelling breasts,—the waves were swirling. All the

days Ilia sat on the prow, admiring the sea, pursuing it with his eyes. The ship went to many harbors to take cargo: dried currants, almonds, barrels of wine and bellied heaps of wood.

Ilia rejoiced about it all, thinking: Such a quantity of things in this world—such a lot of different people and merchandise—as stars in the sky. How much joy on earth! Ilia thought: If he had not met the kind Arefy he would not have known about all this. He was sailing on the seas in clear joy under a warm sun and, as in his spiritual work, he hummed the unforgettable: "Stand Beautiful, Exult and Rejoice, Jerusalem."

By the shores of Greece a black storm gathered and it tossed the ship but Ilia was not frightened. He started to help the sailors as an equal, to furl the sails and to tug at the ropes. While at work he did not notice how the storm passed, and again the sun shone. Tired, he fell asleep on a

coil of wet rope and dreamed: He was sailing on a ship, passing a green island. He was standing on the prow by the anchor looking; boats were sailing from the island to the ship under slanting red sails and in the boats people of every kind; when the boats approached Ilia saw that they were not Greeks or Italians but his people, all of them from Liapunovka: Spiridoshka, the cook; Panfil, the saddle-maker; Andron the coachman; the burgomaster, Kozutop Ivanich, and others. All of them sailing and waving their hands. Then Ilia screamed, ordering the anchor lowered. The anchor thumped. . . .

Ilia woke up and heard that they were letting down the anchor. The ship had come to some unknown town. Ilia deliberated about his dream—such a picture it had been! "What could it mean?"

He descended to the shore, observed how the Turks, with red binding on their heads, were

carrying to the ship hampers of tobacco and barrels of olive oil. He marveled at their strength. He was struck with a huge Turk, with fez and tassel, with hairy arms: that Turk loaded three hampers at a time upon his back, gayly grinning with his teeth. It seemed to Ilia that he was like a chief; he went at the head of the whole gang. Ilia's heart trembled. He screamed, beside himself with joy:

"Panfil, Panfil, the saddle-maker!"

The athletic Turk was carrying on his back a heap of hampers. Hearing the voice he raised himself to his full stature—the hampers rolled to the earth and broke upon the stones; dried plums and blue raisins were scattered around.

Joyfully unexpected was that meeting. Panfil told him that, from Russia, he went to the orthodox Bulgarians and worked in the maize fields and now, for the second year, he had been with the Turks carrying loads. Anyhow this was better than to be in the lord's power. And their language he knew and there was white bread, as much as he wished.

Ilia inquired about Sappho-Sonka. Panfil did not know about her. He pitied her.

"They led her to some of the gay houses. Many lassies from lords' houses we have here,

escaping a pretty life." . . .

Panfil told him that he was saving money, thinking to rent some land and marry. "You can live everywhere, Ilia," he said, "if you only have freedom. And you, of your free will are yoking yourself in serfdom."

Ilia dined with Panfil. He ate boiled mutton, with garlic, on a waffle—chureck, always marvelling: Panfil was quite changed into a Turk—smoking tobacco in a paper and drinking coffee. Panfil said, "The land is always the same—God's land. Stay here, Ilia, they will give you a real Turkish passport."

Ilia remembered his dream and told it to Panfil. Panfil grew pensive.

"So it was—and my father you saw, you mean—it may be he died. Tell him I am alive. Take him some real Turkish tobacco."

Ilia remembered the father of Panfil, the old master smith, Ivan—Strength—pitying him. Very old was Ivan, grieving. Panfil blinked and rubbed his eye with his fist. "I, myself, am seeing dreams." He said dully, "I will return when there shall be freedom."

He took Ilia to the market and bought for his father a warm shirt and a copper pipe.

"Tell him that I live well, without drinking. But serfdom I do not wish."

The ship sailed forth. Sadness came upon Ilia from that unexpected meeting. He thought: "Panfil is living with the Turks and is contented," and he felt bitter. The life to which he was voluntarily going seemed to him quite black. He went on thinking: "No, this all is

temptation like that storm which sought to frighten me." In the evening he prayed, facing the setting sun and was strengthened.

There were no more temptations.

Ilia reached his twenty-second year when he returned to Liapunovo.

IX

During this time much had changed at Liapunovo. They had demolished the old church and erected a new one, a larger one, upon which they built a broad and low dome with a small cross. And the church came to resemble a loaf of bread. The old one was better.

The wood-work painter, Tereshka, had died, and the smith, Ivan—Strength—was burned up with grief and wine; sorrowing for his son. There was no one to get the presents. And Spiridoshka, the cook, had died and the coachman Andron, and many others. Ilia was glad that his aunt Agafya was still living.

Ilia now lived in the cattle-yard, in the small cottage—in freedom. When he returned the lord summoned him to the porch, surprised.

"Oh, welcome, Ilia! It is difficult to recognize you. You look a lord. You became a handsome lad. Well, thank you."

He praised the picture that Ilia had brought for a present—"The Girdling of St. Peter"—an inn-keper had offered Ilia three hundred lira for it—and the lord ordered it hung in the banquet hall. He praised Ilia for getting himself a good attire—a surtout of tobacco color with velvet sides and a waistcoat of blue Manchester and gray plaid pantaloons:

"Now you can appear before guests agreeably."

He praised him also for his seemly behaviour.

"And I was thinking that my Ilia would drink himself away with those reckless Italians. But you turned out to be another kind. Be quiet. I shall not forget your labor. Your studies cost me a thousand in silver. Now you will decorate the church—and what after—we shall see."

The lord ordered Ilia to partake of the workmen's dinner and beside, as a recompense, he ordered him a sweet dish from his own table; supposing he had grown accustomed to "all these macaronis."

But the greatest change was that the lord had married, and already the second year, he had an heir. He had taken his wife from the noble family Vishatov, from the estate Vishata-Temnoe, a beauty. She had intended to retire to a convent after her father's death and then the lord proposed. Ilia learned that the new lady was quiet and gracious, that no one ever heard a bad word from her. On her own estate, Vishatova, she gave her house to the peasants for the old people and orphans, in spite of the lord being angered by it. They told Ilia that the lord was also changed; he became quite calm

and walked after the lady as if on a thread; he dropped all dissipations.

This is what Ilia was told about this marriage: In the same year that the lord took Ilia to

study, in the winter, there came unexpectedly from St. Petersburg the lord Vishatov, with his daughter, Anastasía Pavlovna, and at once ordered, with extreme severity, that they tell everyone that his house was empty and he was not there and had not been there. So he hid for a whole year, not going to anyone and not admitting anyone to himself. From everything he concealed himself. He draped all the windows and bolted all the doors. He did not even go out into the yard. And he did not let the young lady out anywhere. If she only went into the garden for a walk, he would put out his head from the mansard window and scream in a changed voice: "Oi, Nastenka, return!" He ordered that a high fence, with nails, be

erected around the house and on the gateway three bolts with huge padlocks. And he did not even allow the young lady to go to the convent on the biggest holiday, although it was quite near, and he did not go himself. He was always afraid of burglars! He fixed iron grates in the windows himself, not trusting people to do it. Once there came to him a captain executive with some business paper; the lord had to pay some money. He knocked insistently at the gateway and the lord jumped out with a pistol, climbed upon the gate and screamed: "You can kill me, but I shall not give my own blood! Announce that to the one who sent you!"—just as if bereft of reason. And the captain executive left without receiving anything and the lord Vishatov kept guard all night on the threshold and the next night he kept guard near the fence and in the morning they picked him up unconscious on the porch. And so he died unconscious. The burial took place in the convent. The lord Liapunov took all the care upon himself and comforted the orphan. Afterward an aunt arrived. She wished to take the young lady to her own town, Penza. And the lord went every day to Vishatovo. It was told that he even knelt on his knees before the orphan, beating his chest with his fists: "You," he said, "are an orphan and I too am an orphan. Here you have an orphan-I shall swaddle—keep you in down." He brought out his military uniform, hung on his sword. One could not recognize him. The aunt, of course, took his side. He began to speak French. He released all his girls. He began to bring books for the young lady. . . . But it seemed as if she was not willing. There was a rumor that in St. Petersburg the grand-duke, himself, had proposed to her, so, of course, it was painful for her. But at last she was resigned. Her father died in the fourth week of Lent and on the day of the Great Feast of Pokrov, the marriage took place.

¹ The day of the protection given by the Virgin.

Ilia saw that the lord was changed. He did not go about any more in the morning gown, but in a velvet frock coat of scarlet color and he was perfumed. When he had begun to wear the hair-cloth he had ordered all the swans to be killed saying: "Such were the occupations of heathen." And now, white swans were swimming again in the still water of the pond, and screaming with yearning in the sonorous park.

Ilia lived in the cattle-yard, in a cottage. The lord did not summon him. Ilia went to look over the church, musing about the plan of his work. And now an old altar screen for the ikons was standing in it and it looked deserted with its white-washed walls. Ilia examined the plaster, it was fixed well, smoothly, no seams and no ridges, in order for the work. But the lord did not summon him. People started to laugh at Ilia saying, "You, the new lord, you smoothed your way to the lord's graces—now fattening your sides, promenading with a fat muzzle, a

lousy marquis. Here we sweated a hundred times and you sailed on the seas being occupied with pictures."

They visited Ilia, looking over the walls.

"You are busy with pictures? This is a nicelot to get for yourself. Going to be a lord, aren't you? Ask and the master will liberate you."

Ilia would tell them, suppressing his bitterness, "I studied there in order to decorate the church for you. Wait, I shall start."

"For the master! For us the old church was enough."

"No, for you, for you only I worked, for you I returned," said Ilia vehemently. "Had I remained there I would not hear your painful words."

The people did not believe him. His aunt, the old Agafya, used to come to him lamenting, "It would be better, Iliusha, if you had remained there. What are you here? Not a candle for God and not a poker for the 'black one.' Even

the lassies are laughing at you. What is the position you expect now?"

Ilia was silent. He would start to tell the old Agafya about the different marvels. Agafya did not credit him.

The girls were angry with Ilia. He did not even look at them. The burgomaster hinted to his aunt that Ilia had touched the heart of his daughter, and that after having permission from the lord, he would take Ilia into his house as a son-in-law. The burgomaster heard from the lord himself that now Ilia could earn great money by his ikons.

On this too, Ilia was silent. Wearing his Italian hat he walked in the park, sat on the shore of the pond, remembering the past. Still the lord did not call him. Then Ilia went to the lord and announced himself through Stephen, the trained valet.

The lord walked out upon the porch and said that he had forgotten about the church work.

"Look the church over and sketch the plan of the work, then report."

Ilia handed the plan of the work to the lord. The lord turned the plan over in his hands and then told Ilia to give the first place by the throne of God, under the dome, to the martyr, Anastasía and not to the first martyr Stephen. He praised Ilia that he did not forget to give a good place to Saint Sergius,—Sergius was his angel—and said: "And now, mind your work."

And Ilia gave himself to his work.

X

SUMMER passed. The autumn chill settled with rain. The corn kilns started to smoke. The frost knocked, and the church started to freeze. Ilia went to report that his fingers were getting numb and that it was necessary to warm the church for otherwise the hoar frost would damage the paintings. They warmed the church. They held services; few were looking at the walls

hidden by scaffolds. Kapluga came often, clucking his tongue, praising, "Your way to paint is a new way, Ilia. Beautiful, but there is no severity in it."

"The old was severe." Ilia said, "I wish to give you joy, so I paint happy-hearted saints. But there will be severe things, there will be."

Kapluga also was taking offense; Ilia became proud, sometimes not even giving an answer.

The lord also came, looking over the completed paintings, saying, "Famous! A real Italian work! Ilia, do take especial care in painting Anastasía for the lady!"

"I take pains with everyone," said Ilia, without turning, "in my work."

The lord looked severely and repeated severely:

"About Anastasía I speak to you!"

Ilia made no response, gritted his teeth and worked even more hastily. The lord shrugged his shoulders.

"Once more I speak to you, deaf ears, about Anastasía."

Ilia thrust his brushes into the box and said:

"I paint and I paint by my free will. If you do not like my work, sir, give the painting to another. But the great martyr Anastasía I shall paint as I know!" Ilia spoke sharply and firmly looked at the lord.

The lord smiled. He spoke in a new tone:

"You learned to speak freely?"

"In my work I am free," Ilia said. "Of my free will I returned, and I shall work in freedom. Do you command me to drop the work?"

"Go on," said the lord, and he came no more. Ilia worked unceasingly into the second year.

Spring came and was gone. Summer waned, and by the day of Elias, Ilia had completed the work of painting. He came on the porch and said to Stephen, the valet, "Announce that the work is finished."

The lord commanded to tell him: "Tomorrow we shall come to look it over."

Ilia went to the church, removed the scaffolds. He stood in the very middle and looked lovingly over the walls. The soul said to him, "Rejoice Jerusalem!" And more it said: "On a big sea could be your sailing, Ilia!"

There was not one soul in the church. It was a still evening, and the martins were circling around the church. Ilia said: "The work is finished."

And he was saddened.

From the midst of flowers and grapes on the walls were looking the meek ones: Alexis, the man of God, and the humble Lazarus. Keeping guard with weapons were the Archangel Michael with a sword, St. George with spear, and with shield the gracious and ever-faithful Alexander Nevsky. Mefodey and Cyril were setting up the Cross of Faith and giving the letters to the blind people. John, the Golden Mouthed,

Gregory, the Word of God, Basil the Great, were reading the Scriptures with inspiration. George and Savva were looking and calling caressingly. And the stormy Elias of the peasants, on the heights, was thundering with lightning in the clouds. To the resplendent throne of God, under the large dome, were marching on white lilies, under golden grapes, Saint-Martyrs, men and women, a great multitude.

Ilia looked and the joy of his soul increased.

And above the entrance and upon the sides of it, taking up the whole wall, Ilia painted the terrible Last Judgment, like that in the church near the Tiber, which he had come to love so.

The mighty of this world were going in chains to death, and, under golden grapes, with lamp-candles, were thronging joyfully those who were going to life eternal.

They went unclad and bare-footed, the beatific endurers of torment, the meek of spirit, the humble ones and those who had shed tears. They went, an innumerable, multifarious multitude, and those known to Ilia were mingling in this bright file; the wood-work painter Tereshka, his father, and Spiridoshka, the cook; Archipka, the carpenter, who was drowned in the cesspool; Lubka, the Crooked-Eyed, and the silly Sappho-Sonka, and the master of painting, Arefy . . . a great many.

Ilia looked and even more the joy of his soul increased, but there was not a full joy. In his candidness Ilia knew that there was not the living fire that sweetly strikes and elevates the soul. Reconsidering his work, he could not recall it in the way which makes the soul burn.

And the more Ilia considered, the more his soul sorrowed: "but where is that soul blazing with great fire?" In a surging sadness he thought, "Is it possible that for this only I left my freedom?"

All night he spent, without sleep, on his hard berth in the cattle-yard. Doubts were tormenting him. His heart spoke, "It cannot be that I returned for this work." Ilia arose with the earliest dawn and went to church. A white haze was circling in the ravine on the Protochka River. Ilia sat on an old tomb-stone, put his head into his hands and started to think: "Now is finished the work appointed by my lord... for the lord I did the work..."

And then, as in the remote times in the April blooms of the convent garden, in a heavy slumber which descended upon him, It shone before him with a brightness, near to pain, like a foam or like boiling water at the mill. For an instant Ilia lifted up his eyes and with fear and an ineffable joy, he recognized the eyes which had looked into him. They embraced half the sky. They were clear, like the rays of dawn, joyfully scorching the soul. Such eyes are not given to anyone. For a moment they shone like still lightning and went out.

Ilia arose in a tremor. He looked through

tears to the sky which was growing pink above the mist, into the lost joy.

"God . . . Thy beauty I saw. . . ."

Then Ilia understood: everything that flowed into his eyes and soul, and in the days of his life gave him joy,—this was the beauty of the Lord. Ilia sensed: everything which his eyes did not behold, but which is and forever will be,—this is the beauty of the Lord. In a transparent and sensitive dream, he saw a rainbow, thrown over the sky. To those heavenly gates, ships were sailing under red sails. Sea tempests were warring. Inextinguishable star-lampads were glimmering. On insurmountable mountains snows were glistening. Above the peaks of the forests golden crosses were shining. Storms were thundering and sounds of a majestic choral were floating from the far distant yonder; and the white lilies in far-away gardens, and the still apple-tree orchards overspread by sun and the joy of St. Cecilia, left beyond the seas. . . .

In that moment which shone and faded, Ilia understood, with a trembling soul, how inexhaustibly rich he was and what strength he had. He sensed with his soul that it must come, this which burns the soul joyfully.

XI

HIGHER rose the sun. Ilia returned, putting on a clean shirt, to show the work to his masters. He entered the church and it seemed to him that the day was a holiday. He went out into the church-yard. He saw a blue chickory flower on a grave and fixed it in his button-hole. He remembered how he used to give an account of his work on the villas.

At exactly noon his masters came to the church. The new lady was in a white dress. Ilia, for the first time, saw her so near. Pure and youthful, adolescent, she seemed to him. In the center of the church she stood, like a white bride, with

field flowers. Ilia, joyful and perturbed, looked at her little feet in white slippers: accustomed to see only the holy faces, Ilia looked at her and heard his heart throbbing.

Shedding upon him the light of her eyes, she asked him: "And who is this?"

Ilia said, glancing over the dome, "The great martyr Anastasía of Rome, called the 'Lovely One,' is shown in the great circle of torments."

She said, "It is my angel."

And suddenly he saw her.

All her tender beauty he saw, the joyful eyes,—stars, such as could not be, such as no one had. The meek lines of a virginal face which reminded him of his St. Cecilia, a quite pink mouth, half opened childishly, and a darling dress falling in straight lines. He stood as if in an enchantment, without hearing how the lord was asking him: "And why are all the people blind before the first teachers?"

It was she answering, not Ilia: "Because they

are quite dark . . . they know nothing yet."

The lord asked: "Ilia, and why do you have mostly lowly people going to heaven?"

"It is true!" she said, shedding over him the

light of her eyes.

It seemed to Ilia that she looked graciously as if wishing to say something. The numbness passed as if bonds had fallen from Ilia. He said freely: "So it is, according to the scriptures: 'It is easier for a camel to pass' . . . and 'Blessed are the poor in spirit' . . . such was the interpretation: Carpaccio". . .

The lord interrupted: "I know."

She said, again radiant: "I like it . . . I like the whole work."

Her voice was like the soft voices of the organ; her words were like the most tender music ever heard by Ilia. As if elevated from earth, Ilia looked upon that unearthly face, the face of a Madonna that no one had yet painted, at her indefinable eyes, shedding a joyful radiance, so it

seemed to him. He could not take away his eyes now, having forgotten everything, and without hearing the lord asking him for the second time: "And why has Elias, the prophet, the attire of the poorest beggar?"

Ilia replied to that stringent voice: "Prophets were not gathering treasures upon earth. It is said in the books of the prophets". . . .

The lord interrupted again: "I know."

"Here, everything speaks to the soul," she said, light radiating from her eyes. "You must be thanked for it."

Ilia bowed timidly. Her words were to him a great recompense. The lord said: "Yes, Ilia, thank you! You justified my confidence."

And he led the lady away. Ilia stood as if in a dream, hushed—hidden within himself. He looked upon the place where she had stood, all in brightness. He saw on the floor a field carnation that she had held in her hand and he joyfully picked it up. All day he walked as in

a dream, not of the earth: his thought was of her, of his bright lady. All that day, which seemed to be a holiday, he could not find a place for himself. He went out on the porch, looked along the avenue of the park.

Kapluga dropped in.

"Ilia, why are you so gay today? Your work was praised?"

"Yes," said Ilia, "they praised it."

"They must give you freedom for such a deed," said Kapluga.

Ilia did not hear it, thinking only of his bright lady.

The valet came in the evening to the cattleyard; the lord was asking for Ilia: "The lord orders you to his apartments without announcement."

Ilia walked in a sweet tremor; rejoicing and fearing to see her. But the lord was sitting alone, fingering the cards on the table. The lord said: "Here is the matter, Ilia. The lady desires an

ikon—the image of her angel, the great martyr Anastasía. Spare no effort."

"I shall spare no effort," Ilia said, happy.

He did not go home, but wandered until deep night by the still pond. He looked at the falling stars and thought about Anastasía. He tiptoed to the lord's mansion, looked at the black windows. Dioma, the night watchman, called to him, "Why are you walking there, Marquis? Got something to steal?"

Ilia was not hurt. He took Dioma, the hunchbacked, by the shoulders, shook him brotherly and laughed, remembering:

"Dioma, you Dioma, on your back you have a dome,

But your brains aren't always home."

Ilia rapped the gong, handed it back and kissed Dioma on his toothless mouth.

"Do not be cross, brother Dioma."

He went by the park not knowing what to do with himself. Again he neared the pond, frightened off the swans by the stone jetty; they were sleeping, their necks twisted in. He observed how they struck into the dark water. He walked on the dew, searching, in his burned heart, for the longed-for image of the great martyr, Anastasía.

And by the morning, he found it.

XII

For a week Ilia's soul burned while he painted the image of the great martyr Anastasía. He broke from the established tradition and placed a white lily in her hand, as St. Cecilia, in the cathedral at Milan, had.

Anastasía looked as if living. Ilia gave her the eyes of a far away sea and to the white veil of virginity a snowy shimmer. Ilia became joyful; all the day she was looking at him meekly. The masters dropped in to see the work. The lord was surprised that it was ready. Not daring to look up Ilia gave the ikon to the lady.

"How marvelous!" she said, folding her hands

in a childish way. "It is a miracle."

Ilia drew into his soul those inconceivable eyes—stars.

The lord said: "Now I see, Ilia, that you are a mighty master. Speak out, what recompense do you wish?"

Ilia saw how she was looking at him and said, "I need nothing more."

The lord did not understand. He said, "You have had no recompense from me and you say 'I need nothing more.' Queer man!"

Ilia looked upon the lady, on her pale little hand. He drank in all the veins, all the pale pink nails on the fingers and the dark velvety brows, dark rainbows over a fathomless sea and blue stars, such, as in no pictures, in no galleries, he had met. He drank in the unearthly that never is in life.

"And you live here?" she asked with her eyes. Ilia understood the eyes, and said, "Yes, it is good to work here."

The lord marveled at him. "Why is he answering?" And she was looking over the blackish walls, with the felt peeping out, and at the sketches hanging.

She saw the flower girl, the little Lucheska, and asked: "And who is it? What a dear girl!"

Ilia flushed with her look. Perturbed, he said, "Oh, nothing! She was selling flowers by the cathedral."

The lord laughed, "Oh, you, demure one, and still like everyone!"

Something struck into Ilia's heart. Beside himself he tore off the sketch and gave it to her, "Take it, if you like it, my mistress."

For the first time he called her so. Afterward, remembering, he blushed, thinking: "This word is not for her, for her this word is an offense."

She looked as if radiating light. "Keep it, I do not need it."

She looked over all the paintings and sketches. She saw the martyr, the lovely youth, St. Sebastian, pierced with arrows—she looked for a time as if praying. And Ilia prayed also—to the ever-bright image revealed to him in her. She spoke—singing, he heard. She turned her eyes upon him—a sweet torture tormented Ilia's soul.

She went—a torture remained which was stronger than death. Ilia fell on the prickly matting, his hard resting place, gritted his teeth, shedding tears, saying in moans: "Oh Lord, a great torture, this trial is sent me. I shall not have peace I know. And I have no life."

So he lay until evening in a sweet torment.

And in the evening two persons came—"the cunning one," and the valet boy Spirka, "the swift one," bringing a wooden bed on twisted legs, two chairs, a sea-weed mattress and a bellied cabinet. Spirka said, "So it is, Ilia Terentich, the mistress herself ordered us to bring it."

And the cunning Luka added: "Thus she spoke—'his chamber is like a kennel.' Happiness is drifting toward you, Ilia. Carnival came for the cat. You snatched the soft portion, now pamper yourself; just wait and a pillow and a blanket will come to you."

They fingered the pictures, laughing at the lord, "You enchanted him by reading the scriptures, Ilia; now you will cover him with images."

Ilia did not speak one word. He remained standing, covering his face with his hands, repeating to himself, "Herself, the lady, ordered."

He looked into the darkness of the night and was seeing her, his bright lady. Her face was

changing, and from the darkness looked the great martyr—the beautiful Anastasía. And she changed, and then the inconceivable eyes shone—two suns. Ilia fell on his knees in a sweet torture—joy. He clung with his lips to the old floor where she had stood and kissed the planks. All night Ilia was throwing himself about in his cell, walking to the steps, listening to the chirp of the grasshoppers in the trees around, like the crickets that remained beyond the seas. Asking the darkness—sorrow: "What is it?"

It began to dawn. Ilia looked at the bed, just sent—he did not lie on it. It was terrifying to lie down upon a bed sent by her. It seemed to be a sacrilege. He rested on the matting and slept deeply. He awoke when the sun was just mounting over the pond. He went to the dam, passed further to the Protochka river, walked further on the highway to the convent. Through the forests he went, singing. The forest stillness engulfed him joyously. Some reckless spirit re-

sounded in the clear morning, in the warble and the whistle of the red-breasted woodpecker, in the sonorous echo. Ilia started to sing the rambling forest song:

"One trail alone the blizzard does not sweep Oh the blizzard and the tempest do not sweep."

An uncontrollable joy overcame Ilia. He knocked with his stick on the sonorous pines and sang. From all sides it flowed back sonorously and far reaching:

"Aye, tempests-blizzards sweep the trail!"

The forest ended and Ilia saw the white convent, above the Nirlia river, with gilded turnip domes. Ilia paused on the hill and looked greedily, with a drinking-in look. He looked at the white wall of the cathedral facing southward. He whistled and went to the convent. He said to the mother treasurer: "I wish to decorate the southward wall for you. St. George

with the dragon. Get permission from my lord. I am willing to start even tomorrow."

The mother treasurer rejoiced. She knew how heavenly were Ilia's decorations in the church of Liapunovo.

And in one month the youthful St. George, on a white horse, was stabbing victoriously the villainous dragon in armor, his head that of a man. Marvelously beautiful was the youthful St. George, neither masculine nor feminine, but as an angel in the image of a man, with pale countenance and blue eyes. He was so beautiful that the novices stood long before that wall and began to see him in dreams. And a rumor spread in the neighborhood that the St. George on the convent wall was alive and that he even moved his eyes.

XIII

Again Ilia had no work.

He walked through the avenues of the park, in his Italian hat, as if he had lost something.

He looked at the sky and the falling leaves. The park vistas opened and the white body of the master's long house, in which someone played the piano in the evening, was seen more clearly. Ilia walked through the chief avenue.

In the red sunset, the majestic swans were swimming, pink and gold in the sun. Their for-lorn scream resounded in the park.

Ilia was painting the swans and the autumn island and the always deserted lime tree avenue with its yellow heaps of leaves. Ilia painted the stone dam, with its reflection and the black gaps of the spillways. All this was over-shadowed with sadness.

Ilia thought with yearning: "Now winter approaches, snow will heap up and the long nights will come. Already there are no more birds. The geese are flying after the sun." He listened to the whistling of the autumn bluebonnets.

It was seldom that he had the happiness of

hearing anyone playing the piano in the lord's house.

Ilia heard that again the lord was restless. People said that he was going again to the farm-house where the lassies lived. He did not believe it.

Once Ilia sat by the stone jetty. Having nothing else to do he was drawing. He had sketched the planks of the bridge and the lonely boat. About his fate he was thinking, "What will come now?" and sorrow, equal to pain, came to him, that he did not stay with Terminelli. The old stones he remembered, the white roads, the merry faces, cathedrals, joyful songs and the still, little Lucheska with flowers. He thought: "I could have lived and worked there." He remembered Panfil with the hampers, how they sat by the sea eating mutton, their feet hanging. "They will give you a real Turkish passport!" Ilia thought with yearning: "I painted the church and no one seems to need it. It seems true that they were contented with the old one. Yes, it is so! Not a candle for God; not a poker for the 'black one'."

Sadness was weighing him down. In that sadness Ilia found an outlet; to ask the lord to fix a ransom for his freedom.

At that moment Ilia heard a rustle and turned. She was standing like a white vision, in the slanting sun, in the wide avenue leading from the house, holding her favorite white hound by the collar. Ilia rose and bowed.

"How do you do?" she said.

Her voice seemed sad to Ilia. Not knowing what to do he was standing, "Must he go or must he remain?" And she was standing in the yellow leaves, petting the hound. They both stood thus for a moment, more than once their eyes met. Ilia looked as if upon the sun, as on a beauty which had descended from the sky, looked, holding his breath.

"You are sad, dear Ilia, you have no more work now?"

"Yes . . . I have no work," said Ilia, fingering the edge of his hat.

Then she approached and said softly. "I understand, Ilia. You must have your freedom."

Ilia raised his eyes and embraced her with them and said with pain: "Why my freedom?"

Ilia gazed at her for one moment but that look said more than words can say. She spoke to him, with a long deep look and he saw in it perturbation and regret, and what else—joy?—As if for the first time she recognized and understood him, youthfully beautiful, with tender, gracious eyes which had drawn to him the maidens beyond the seas. Boldly, as never before, Ilia looked at her, with eyes, wishing to live.

For one moment Ilia looked at her and then he dropped his eyes, and, with only a moment's glance, she said she knew. Again Ilia heard the rustle of leaves and saw how softly her white dress played, and the little hand pulled the collar of the impatient hound. He looked and, in her movement, he saw that she was thinking about him. He looked after her until she turned into a side path. He thought: "Will she turn? Oh, if only she would turn!"

She did not turn.

XIV

On the day of the Nativity of the Virgin, Ilia went to the convent as he used to go in the old times. The convent always gave him joy. He went as a lord: he had on gray plaid trousers, a waist-coat of blue Manchester and a coat of tobacco color with velvet sides. He stopped on the dam. Seeing himself in the clear water he laughed, "Here he is, the Marquis."

The familiar fair was spread around the convent. The meadow surrounding the convent and the trading square of the village, Rojdestvina, were black with people. The vagrant salesmen were selling nankeen stuffs, red fustian,

multi-colored kerchiefs and belts, beads and all kinds of warm merchandise and shoes. It smelled sweetly of honey, ginger and mint from white hampers of sweet pastries; different kinds of cakes, carved into cocks and fishes, dried plums, raisins, Caucasian sweets, apple jam, nut pastries. The carts were spreading like a village, heaped with yellow and blue turnips, washed and scarlet carrots, the new forest nuts, and threshed peas. The peasants had piled white mountains of wooden sleighs and troughs, barrels for cabbages and cucumbers, spades, rakes, ploughs and gay fresh wooden merchandise. The apple traders settled under the white walls with carts of waxy yellow Antonovka and bright Anise apples from the lord's orchard. By the taverns and the bars horses from the stock farms were tied in the manure, and a vagrant gypsy band, in gaudy tatters, was beating copper gongs, their eyes and silver trinkets sparkling.

Ilia walked, looked, and remembered how it

was in his childhood. It was the same now. The sacred merchandise, from Holuia, with bright foil and lacquer struck the eye. The most familiar ikons of St. Nicholas, the Virgin of Kazan, the Nativity of our Lord, rows on rows, looked all alike.

With a smile Ilia looked at the severe faces, adorned with pink halos, remembering the joyful Arefy. He bought yellow and blue turnips. He remembered how he used to peel them with his teeth, but the old time joy did not come. He bought his favorite nuts and a wooden peasant with a bear, snapped it and gave it away to a bigmouthed boy, who was looking at him hungrily. He went after the Cross-bearing throng and watched how the people crawled under the worshipped ikons—old folk, women and lassies dropping down with babies into the mud, getting their fingers mashed. He looked at the appealing, wooden, strained faces and quivering lips. He heard the heavy sighs, moans and shouts, abusive

and warning voices—"Batushka, I am being crushed!" He saw the resting place of the tipsy under the convent wall, whither the drunken were dragged for order's sake, and put down among the burdocks. The same ancient, bald man, with a red bump near his eye, sat on a stump guarding the drunken, receiving some coins. Ilia saw, under the loaded, always bountiful, sorb apple trees by the convent gate, "The Flock of God": all kinds of cripples sitting in rows, mumbling, lamenting, showing their scars and infirmities, trying to arouse the pity of the Godfearing. He recognized Petka, the scabby, with up-turned bloody lips, and the "Goose" who frightened him in childhood. The "Goose" did not speak but hissed, stretching his neck, long as an arm. Ilia passed with pain and repugnance by the "Flock of God," appeals following him: "Lord, give alms, lord."

The tradespeople were calling Ilia a lord and peasants who knew him were speaking with sneers and envy: "Honors to the Marquis! Maybe you feel like buying a horse?"

Dissipated girls in bright sarafans with kerchiefs slipped down on their necks, were stopping Ilia, laughing:

> "Ilusha, darling rosy lad, Let us go for a ramble."

They were tipsy; wives of state and vassal soldiers from the big highway, a gaudy, restive flock, rambling, taunting the visitors. Boys and girls were running after them, tugging at their starched sarafans, teasing them. Peasant women spat after them and the peasants grimly avoided them. Ilia remembered two of them, Lizutka who had a stepmother from the state village Mitke, and Pasha, the "Clear One."

This day there were many new ones and all annoyed him, calling him Ilusha. Temptation floated from them.

Ilia thought about them—miserable, and about the cripples and the tipsy plot. The fair did not assuage his sadness. Ilia retired to a hill, went higher, to the turn into the forest and looked at the meadow and the dotted square on which the ikon was still being carried. He remembered how, beyond the seas, they used to carry white statues, perched on sticks. The monks had walked ceremoniously, girdled with ropes, releasing white doves. He regretted not having remained there: "It is lighter there."

An old dirty gypsy witch approached him and sang:

"Prince, my beauty, love is gnawing you. Put something on my hand, you lucky, I will tell you the truth."

Ilia gave her a coin to get rid of her. The gypsy said: "Your sweet-heart is sorrowing, in her dream kissing her beloved. There is nothing to be done, so wait until evening."

She went jingling with coins.

Ilia thought of going home in surrender to sadness. He had risen when he heard on the bridge, behind him, a tramp and the strident shout of the boy out-rider to the horses. The lord's blue coach passed, galloping on the uneven sand. Ilia recognized, with a pang in his heart, his young lady sitting alone in the coach, in a blue hat with ribbons, with a bunch of autumn flowers: dahlias, sweet peas, coxcombs, carrying them for the ikon. He watched that blue spot moving among the piles of white sleighs and carts of turnips until the coach vanished into the convent gate. It then struck for the late mass and they carried the ikon back from the square.

Ilia sat for three hours on the bridge by the road. Before his eyes, in the sunlight, lay the variegated fair with red fustians, spots of black and bundles of fresh goods. But the blue spot did not vanish—remained in his eyes, like a glimpse of sky revealed to him. "My bright one," spoke Ilia to the convent walls, "My joy-

ful one." With every word he ever knew he called her, as if frenzied, now seeing nothing but her. With sweet poison he fed himself, recalling her eyes, drinking from them her clear soul, becoming intoxicated. Almost to tears, almost to agony he called her back and kissed the vision of her. Yearning sweetly he waited three hours by the road.

And when he saw the blue coach, with red-sleeved coachman Yakim and the joyful blue spot, emerge from the convent gate, he left the road and hid in the nut bushes at the edge of the forest. He watched hungrily, through an opening, as the coach climbed up the sandy slope, he saw his young lady reclining in the pillows, looking toward the sky. Hungrily, Ilia looked at her, his priceless joy, and kissed her with his eyes. Softly the coach passed, in the sand, quite near. Ilia even saw the dark mole on her neck, even the half closed curved eye-lashes, even the ribbons on her breast moved by her breath, and

the childish lips. Ilia followed with his gaze, as something divine, the blue coach creaking in the sand, vanishing among the pines. He stepped upon the road, he gazed at the track which was becoming effaced in the sand, and listened to the wheels knocking on the roots.

XV

ILIA intended to go to bed, there was nothing to do—black night. Rain started and a rustling sound in the forest. There was a knock at the window! Spirka, the Swift One, came and said that the lord summoned him. Ilia's heart bounded; it frightened him and gave joy.

Master and mistress were sitting in the bedchamber by the fireplace, getting warm. The "lion's jaw" roared with pine logs. The walls glowed in the red fire-light and the broad, luxurious bed looked rose colored under its silk cover. Ilia saw a soft, red carpet, ancient, with bouquets, the very same which was there in the time of the gypsy. He paused in the passage by the door, shy about entering. But the lord called him from the passage: "Just wipe your feet!"

Ilia entered and paused by the door. The lord sat in a deep leather chair, crunching a white cabbage stalk; they were lying in a pile on a plate. The lady reclined in a low velvet chair, warming her feet. First of all, in the bright fire-light, Ilia saw her red quilted slippers embroidered with gold. Then he saw her thin silk stockings and her morning gown of white and gold brocade trimmed with ribbons; then the delicate pink hands in her lap, rich plaits falling upon her breasts and last—the face. She looked wearily into the fire—drowsy. A beautiful dream, Ilia was seeing, a fairy-tale princess.

Ilia bowed silently toward the fireplace. The lord said: "Now listen, Ilia, I heard that you were thinking of offering a ransom for your freedom?"

Ilia wished to speak, but the lord made a sign with his finger—for him to listen.

"I, myself, understand that it is hard for you. What work can I give you? And then . . . your mistress spoke in your behalf."

Ilia bowed in silence—not to show his trembling voice. He felt tears gathering. Unceasingly he gazed upon the white-pink face as that of one sleeping. And then the dark lashes quivered and lifted. New eyes, dark from the fire, looked at Ilia, touched him tenderly and again closed.

"You shall have your freedom. Today, at the convent, the mistress saw your work. 'The Triumphant St. George.' She admired it. She said the face was extraordinary."

Ilia gazed unremittingly at his bright lady. She was reclining in the same position. In the blazing fire-light her lashes seemed quivering. And when the lord spoke about the extraordinary face again Ilia saw the lashes lifted and she

looked. Her look was joyfully grateful, caressing and warm. Ilia—frozen—stunned, dropped his eyes to the fire.

"You paint marvelously, Ilia," she said. "I

have a favor to ask of you."

Ilia was shaken by her voice, but the lord interrupted. "Favor, if it can be called a favor! Spare no effort in this last work: The lady wishes you to paint her portrait. Can you?"

Ilia could not answer at once. He gathered his strength and said almost inaudibly: "Every effort." He heard himself, the voice not his own.

The lord looked at Ilia: "Now tell me, can you?"

And she said, "You see, Ilia, I wish that" . . .

But the lord interrupted her. "Now speak. Can you?"

This interruption threw Ilia into a fever. Her living words resounded in the room: "I wish

that" . . . What did she wish? And Ilia said firmly, "I can."

And he looked at her freely, as in the park, some time before. Bonds fell from his soul and he felt himself free and strong. He asked bravely:

"Can I start tomorrow?"

It was fixed for the morrow. "I shall work in the banquet room in the full light," Illa said. He looked at her and said even more bravely: "The lady has a pale face. A dark attire is better for the life of her face. Black or marine color"...

Her face brightened and she said: "So I wished."

Ilia marveled. In one instant she became different, even more beautiful.

Ilia found strength to accept his great trial. He walked in the rain to the cattle-yard, carrying her serene look, crushing his fingers, repeating, all a-quiver: "I shall paint you; you the one who never was. And you shall be!"

XVI

From that hour sweet torments began for Ilia, burning clear the soul.

All night he did not close his eyes. In tremor and yearning he paced his narrow cell, now stopping in the corner before the ancient black ikon, which his father left, with its features effaced, crushing his hands; now gazing at the dark walls, searching for something distant, something nameless, but which was; now washing hastily the brushes, preparing the paints and cleaning the palette. He brought forth a reliable canvas from the Vatican, dependable, and fastened it upon the frame. At times dark fear seized him and at times boundless joy filled him.

Just before dawn he fell into a sensitive sleep. He sprang up at a knock upon the window, but there was no one outside the window: rain was knocking. Ilia looked angrily at the sky:—clouds, clouds. But before morning the wind blew and the clouds sailed away. There was sun when Ilia went to the house.

Ilia was getting ready for his work, in the banquet hall, pale, with burning eyes and trembling hands. He feared to see *her*. But his anxiety was in vain. The young mistress entered and said graciously: "How do you do, dear Ilia—something happened to you? Are you well?"

Ilia bowed, spoke indistinctly and started his work. With one glance he saw the darling black dress, the timid frail shoulders and the face, with shadows, that appeared thinner since yesterday. Ilia saw a new radiance of the eyes, like the radiance of the sea in the wind,—radiance of still sadness. He thought: the eyes became different. And they became different when he started to sketch with charcoal; they were changing; joyful they were; she asked: "Must I keep quiet?"

But Ilia did not hear the words, and again she asked. "No; speak, please"... he answered. His voice trembled, and the charcoal in his hand. Now he gazed constantly upon her face, torn away from life and given to him—only to him. Now he was drinking tirelessly from her changing eyes, the first eyes with such a radiance. He had seen on the canvases in the galleries thousands of eyes, lovingly taken from life, but such not one Madonna had.

Ilia saw measurelessness in their darkening depths—measurelessness of holy light. He could not name what he saw. Joy? But sorrow also, clear sorrow, Ilia sensed in them, and that sorrow was beautiful. Unexistent beauty, everything that ought to be to illuminate life, and what life has not, Ilia saw.

The lord came and said: "Enough! Time for dinner."

Day after day that torment continued joyfully

burning the soul. Ilia did not live those days. He did not touch food. Only a piece of bread and a cup of water kept up his strength. She came in his short, restless sleep, changing: now in the purple of the great martyr Barbara, now in the clear attire of St. Cecilia, now in the robes of the Rubens Madonna. Half dressed she was translated into his dream, in the sumptuous garments of a beautiful Venetian, now enticing him in the avenues, now reclining seductively on a couch. In a voluptuous faintness Ilia drank her fleshless love at nights, and, coming to her, did not dare to look at the pure.

She would ask with anxiety, "Dear Ilia, what is the matter with you. You are tired?"

Ilia spoke, pained by her anxiety, "Oh, no, I am well."

Now he did not look at her changing face. He knew it, hers, and the new one created during his nights. She addressed him, he trembled at her voice. He spoke and did not remember, answered, and did not understand.

But there were moments, when he folded his hands and looked, forgetting everything, and there were moments when he was embracing all of her with his gaze, with passion surging to his eyes. She evaded his gaze, hid her neck and pulled in her shoulders. He gathered himself together and stopped his work.

At nights Ilia raved in his cell. He clasped his hands fervently before her new face, kneeling down before it and caressing it with words. With the flowing in of morning, he gave expression to the new, which had dawned on him in the night.

Unearthly was that image. It was not a canvas he used: endowed with a power burning in his heart, he took a board prepared for a church painting. She looked different, joy inexhaustible, transformed by his suffering. She appeared to him as a clear protection, a bulwark against the power of flesh that was overcoming him. Virginally pure she emerged in the night—a saint.

All that Ilia had come to know, joys and sufferings, earth and sky and things in them, life in darkness, and the other, far away, beyond the seas, everything which had flowed into his soul was creating in Ilia that second image.

With power given to Ilia in the lightnings of God, the inconceivable eyes filling half the sky, the blazing lightnings revealed to him in the sunrise stillness which joyfully burned his soul: with this power was created her unearthly image. Sky, earth and sea, nightly yearnings and the pains of life, all things which he had lived, Ilia put everything into this marvellous image. It spread before his eyes and could not find expression. It was immense to his eyes, as fathomless as the very brief life even of an ordinary person.

They were two: one in a black gown, with

her face and joyfully splashing eyes, supersensitive and longed for, and the other one, who can never die.

And now on the twentieth day. Ilia finished his work. He said to his lady, "Now, my work is finished."

And he was pained.

And she, joyful, folded her hands childishly, looked, and said, "How beautiful! Can it be I?"

The lord was not in, gone for a hunt. Ilia began to collect his brushes.

She said, "Ilia, you did it for me. I know. I wished to have your work. She will perpetuate me for my child.". . .

And then Ilia saw how her eyes darkened with sorrow and the lips were drawn with bitterness. He said with words: "It was sweet to paint your image." With his look he said more. She looked at him timidly. This look Ilia accepted as a recompense.

XVII

THE lord returned from the hunt, but it was said that he was returning from the farm house where the lassies lived. He fulfilled his promise. Ilia received a legal paper granting him his freedom. The household folk asked Ilia:

"What is the position you will get for your-self now, Ilia?"

They were surprised that Ilia did not think of leaving to work in freedom. Some said: "He is cosy, sitting on our backs."

Kapluga said to them: "You wooden fools! You must honor him! He volunteered, by himself, for such labor, to decorate the church for you! For two years—consider—he worked alone—and you say 'He is cosy on our backs!"

Ilia did not wish to go anywhere. Autumn—where can one go? He went to the lord and thanked him for his freedom. He asked permission to remain until spring. The lord assented:

"You can live here until your death, Ilia. This is your right."

Ilia marveled. Spirka, the swift one, began to bring him dishes from the lord's table.

He asked Spirka: "Tell me, who ordered you to bring me these dishes?"

Spirka grinned. "The mistress told me to."

He squirmed, hesitated, and added: "And the lord has gone again to see his lassies and the lady is mighty lonely."

Ilia's heart yearned sweetly. He went to the park, rambled in the rustling leaves. He looked toward the house through the now leafless shrubs. He walked for a week, hoping for a meeting. Rains were falling. Ilia felt ill. Was he exhausted by the consuming work or was it the sickness which had long been creeping upon him? Ilia began to grow weak and the cough did not leave him. Once Spirka brought the dinner and saw Ilia sitting before the hot stove in his sheep's skin coat. Ilia said: "You eat it, Spirka."

And towards morning, all was white, outside the windows; snow fell and there was a slight frost. Winter made Ilia glad; winter brings health. He began to tidy his room when he heard heels tapping on the steps. Ilia looked from the window and gripped his breast: she, his young mistress, was standing on the porch in a white coat with a white silk shawl on her head,—new.

"Here I am, to see you, Ilia!" she said, light shedding from her eyes. "You are not well? I came to thank you for your work . . . I have forgotten."

And she graciously gave him her hand. Something whirled and darkened before Ilia's eyes, he seized her little hand and with his lips hungrily clung to it, he fell upon his knees before her, his queen, lavished frenzied kisses on her snowy feet, crying. . . .

She looked at Ilia in fear, not removing her hand. Ilia remembered that fear and tenderness

were in her eyes, and pain unutterable and more, that he never put into words. She was whispering, in fear, "Do not, darling . . . get up!"

But he embraced her delicate knees and called her . . . he did not remember how. And he saw a new face; her pale face blazed with flame and a somber blue fire flashed in her eyes, and her lips he remembered, her new mouth, bereft of its virginal lines and ardent.

It was but a moment. She looked firmly and said firmly, "Ilia, do not". . .

And she hastily departed. Ilia saw tears in her eyes. This was the last happy day of his life—the most glorious.

Ilia was living his last days: not many remained. Feeble, he lay in the daytime, recalling his hard life and he thought: "I have not long to live. Let *her* know, my bright lady, about my life and about my love." He took a booklet and started to write his life.

Toward spring Ilia heard that the mistress had

given birth to a daughter and that the lord now, for the second week, had been absent on a hunt. Aunt Agafya came and told him that the lady, now for a half year, had not lived with the lord, to put it plainly, "did not sleep with him." She had settled in the other half of the house where the grandfather had lived. Ilia also learned that it was said the lady had discovered the lord with her maid, Anuta.

Then Ilia understood much and sadness overflowed his heart, and two days later—it struck him like a thunderbolt—the lady died.

He could scarcely walk but gathered his strength for the farewell. Ilia saw his bright lady, supremely beautiful, new, in her last sleep. Like everyone, he gave her the last kiss.

After the interment of the remains of the recently departed Anastasía, Ilia came to the lord and said:

"I wish to decorate the sepulchre."
The lord looked at him dully and said dully:

"Yes, Ilia, it turned out badly. You, also are not well. Go paint!"

Ilia worked for two weeks in the cold, damp sepulchre, painting the angel of death, spreading black wings on the arches, a stern face, with grim eyes, in which tears were standing. The stern angel was bending over the head-stone of the tomb of Anastasía. Ilia decorated the arches as black velvet and he painted living white lilies, flowers of the beautiful land.

Having completed the work, the very hardest of all his works, Ilia fell and arose no more. Kapluga came to see him. Ilia said to him:

"See, I am dying. Go to the convent . . . tell them. Bring with your horse the confessor of the convent, to whom I confess, Father Sergius. I am not able to go."

Kapluga fulfilled the last wish of Ilia. He, himself, brought the Father. Father Sergius remained in privacy with Ilia for about an hour, then he summoned the sub-deacon, the old

Agafya and the lowly barn cleaner, Stepashka, as witnesses, and before them all, Ilia declared that he was leaving to the convent his ikon, the "Inexhaustible Cup" and now, for the first time, Kapluga saw the ikon, veiled with a fresh cloth. Ilia ordered the veil removed and everyone saw the Saint with the Golden Cup. Her face was that of the Mother of God, marvelously beautiful! Snowy white was the frontlet, sprinkled with shining pearls and torquoises, and her eyes, "stunning," so it seemed to the sub-deacon. Kapluga marvelled that it was painted without the Divine Child, not according to the tradition, but he looked and could not tear away his eyes. 'And the afflicted, half-numbed, crooked-legged barn cleaner, Stepashka, looked and said,-"Joyful."

Ilia died on a warm spring night. Through the open window he heard the nightingale singing in the park near the pond. Ilia listened and thought, "He is singing on the island in the sorbapple tree." Agafya and the old man Stepashka received the last sigh of Ilia.

The old Agafya related to Kapluga: "He spoke, 'Tell me, aunty Agafya, it seems a nightingale is singing'?"

" 'It sings, Ilusha,' I answered.

"'Aunty, where is it singing, on the pond?"

"'On the pond, on the island,' I said.

"'On the island?' he asked.

"'On the island, Ilushechka,' I replied. Then he dozed a little and said. 'Aunty Agasha, you take all my property. I have nobody nearer than you,' and afterward seeing Stepashka, he added: 'To uncle Stephan, give something, aunty Agasha, my coat, give him'."

Those two lowly ones received the last sigh of Ilia, who departed quietly. He was quietly buried and the lord ordered them to put on his grave a big boulder stone and to carve the words.

Ilia died—and was forgotten. The grass grew over his tomb on the north side of the church, the stone sank, covered with moss. It became invisible in the thick grass.

XVIII

THE convent took Ilia's ikon, "Inexhaustible Cup," his last gift. The mother superior and the old nuns wondered; Ilia knew well the traditions of church painting but represented the Immaculate Virgin with a cup, like a martyr, without the Divine Child. And their souls were troubled. But Father Sergius said, "The chalice is the Divine Child. The early Christians used to paint with signs; they painted a fish, a door and a grape-vine—symbols hidden from the wicked ones."

Then they decided, with one accord, to consecrate the ikon, but not to leave it in the church, but to place it in the convent dining-hall. When dining, the sisters looked joyfully at the ikon and could not see enough of it.

In a short time the sisters started to whisper

that, in their dreams, the ikon "Inexhaustible Cup" appeared. They told it to the old nuns and in their confessions to the Father. The old nuns also started to see it in their dreams, and the rumor spread in the convent that the ikon was miraculous. The mother superior drove to see the Archbishop. The Archbishop concluded not to announce it for a time but to verify it, with all severity, with a pure heart, that there might not be offense, and in the meanwhile to write everything down, under a pledge. The mother treasurer, a learned nun, Xenia, began to keep a severe record.

A short time after this a retired artillery man, an afflicted one, named Martin Korablev, crawling on crutches since the campaign of Sebastapol, his feet swelling and becoming paralyzed, lodged at the convent for a rest. He was graciously received by the convent, fed and warmed. The afflicted Martin came to the dining hall and saw the joyful ikon "Inexhaustible Cup," the sisters

having told him, with a secret hope, that the ikon was appearing to them in dreams, lovingly be-seeching that She be carried to the cathedral for all the peoples' prayers. The afflicted Martin could not take away his softened gaze from the joyful face of the Immaculate Virgin of the "Inexhaustible Cup" and, in spite of great difficulty in doing it, he made before her three obeisances to the ground. During the whole meal he sat with his eyes on the unbelievable image, praying by himself.

In the morning he asked to see the mother superior and confided in her, under a great pledge, that the miraculous ikon of the Immaculate Virgin with the Golden Cup, had appeared to him, as in reality, and spoke: "Drink from my Cup, humble Martin, and thou shalt be healed."

The mother superior said, "I, and all of the sisters of the convent, were more than once granted revelations by the Immaculate Virgin, but we keep it undisclosed for a time."

Then the afflicted Martin began to plead importunately and with tears, that a service be held, with the consecration of water, before the "Inexhaustible Cup." His prayer was granted with joy and there was held in the dining hall a solemn service with the consecration of water. The whole convent prayed, with tears, asking for the miraculous intervention. They consecrated the water and the afflicted Martin took this in a flask and rubbed his feet, but the Immaculate Virgin did not grant him restoration.

Silently the sisters sorrowed and temptation and offense were creeping into their souls. With great sorrow the afflicted Martin left Visoko-Vladichny convent.

And in the morning the old mother at the gate Virineia, rushed, as if beside herself, with loud weeping, to the porch of the mother superior and exclaimed:

"The Immaculate Virgin took pity on our

sorrows! The afflicted Martin is healed! I saw it with my own eyes! He is walking without crutches!"

Not daring to rejoice they inquired of her how she knew it.

She spoke, overwhelmed by joyful tears, "By the Holy Gates Martin is telling it to the people."

Then the whole convent went and saw Martin, the soldier, standing surrounded by a great number of people, because it was a market day. Martin was barefooted and was showing his feet to everyone. The sisters marvelled, seeing the feet like those of healthy people. The mother superior and the elder nuns testified, with the sign of the Cross, that yesterday those feet were swollen with water, as if wooden, and yellow with infection. And Martin, displaying his crutches, proclaimed to the people:

"Brethren, I could scarcely creep to Michaylovskoe. My feet were cramped with pain, could not stand it, the peasants sheltered me for the night, helped me to creep into the hut, the women lifted me to the stove and started, at my prayers, to rub my feet with the water from the 'Inexhaustible Cup.' I had no strength left. It seemed as if my feet were cut off. I became quite unconscious, paralyzed . . . and now, brethren . . . I can kiss the Holy Cross . . . let God strike me dead! . . . I heard a sweet voice 'Humble Martin,' and I saw the Joyful with the Golden Cup, with the unbelievable eyes that were like living light . . . 'Rise, humble Martin, walk, and rejoice!' I became conscious: dark night, nothing to be seen in the hut, all folks sleeping, and I feel that my feet have no pain. I touched them, Oh Lord, but where were my legs, my torment! I left the stove by myself. I stood! No pain in the feet! I did not feel them at all. I woke the master—a torch was lighted. And I walked in the hut, crying."

Peasants and peasant women who came with Martin from Michaylovskoe confirmed his words.

Then there was an uproar and the crowd asked to have a thanksgiving sermon before the "Inexhaustible Cup."

There was exultation in the convent of Visoko-Vladichny. The news spread through all the neighborhood. Great numbers of people thronged uninterruptedly to the "Inexhaustible Cup," with illness and grief, with their dejections and sorrows, with offenses, searching consolation, and to many it was granted.

The Archbishop ordered, yielding to the repeated prayers of the convent and those who had been granted consolation, that the ikon be transferred to the main cathedral. He arrived with an ecclesiastical committee and beheld it personally. For a long time he could not tear his gaze from the unspeakably joyful face. He said with penetration:

"It is not painted according to the tradition, but a revelation of profound significance is evident." He ordered the learned Archbishop's master to paint—not touching the face—the Divine Child standing in the Cup: that the ikon might be in accordance with the subjects of church painting: the Vision of the Virgin Mary.

The learned church painter arrived at the convent and painted The Holy Child in the sacred bosom of the Cup. An annual celebration was fixed for the twenty-seventh day of November.

Year after year people thronged to the "Inexhaustible Cup," their numbers increasing, year by year. The neighborhood started to esteem that ikon as its own, honoring it for the healing of the obsession of drink. They named it in their own way, the "Exhaustible Cup."

Town people staying in the neighborhood, landlords' families of the locality, citizens from nearby provincial towns, love to go to the fair at the convent of Vladichny, when the Holy

Throne is celebrated on the day of the Nativity of the Saint Virgin. It holds much that is interesting for the curious eye. For a half century peasants' carts have crept by the forest roads to the convent. From farther than a hundred miles dead-weary peasant women have carried their near ones, frenzied peasants with beastly countenances, shrieking with wild voices, struggling to escape their bonds.

The "Exhaustible Cup" helps those obsessed by drink, those who have lost human appearance, stare with frenzied eyes, at the Unspeakable Face not understanding who and what She is, watching serenely with the Golden Cup, joyful, and calling them to Herself—and they are soothed. And when serene maidens, in white kerchiefs, carry Her after the altar ikon, singing with joyful voices, "Rejoice, 'Inexhaustible Cup'!" thousands with wounded souls, searching for a joyful comfort, fall on the dirty earth under Her. Inflamed, blinded eyes gaze fiercely at the clear

Face and they shriek, frenziedly, the prompted, asked for, "I abjure." Hysterical women, are convulsed, wailing, rending their garments, revealing black, drying breasts, and stare frantically at those eyes which call after Themselves. Brides come to hang pink ribbons—hostages of happiness. Young women bring their first-born and the "Inexhaustible Cup" contemplates them joyfully. What is it that draws them to her? No one can say. They have not yet found the word to speak out their inner feeling. They only sense that something joyful descends into the soul.

It is known in the convent that the burglar Akim Tretyack, who roamed in the neighborhood, brought for the ikon a diamond ring. He sent it with a note to the mother superior. The convent did not accept the gift, but wrote it down in its records as a "marvelous occurrence."

The uncouth convent fair is all a-clamor, the motley booths blare with red fustians and calico,

¹ I abjure drink.

mountains of white carts and troughs gleam in rain and in sun, on the black mud. Carts with yellow and blue turnips and scarlet carrots stand in rows; bright Anise apples and the succulent Antonovka, displayed on hay, flow against the walls. The old fair has not changed its immemorial aspect. Rows of severe St. Nicholases, with halos, are blessing the crowds, their hands up-lifted with the sign of the Cross. The beggarly cripples are mumbling and wailing by the convent's gate.

"The Inexhaustible Cup" carried by white kerchiefed maidens moves slowly through the dirty, sloppy square. Enticingly and joyfully it looks at every one.

In the village, on the outskirts of the fair, where the horses are tethered, the inns are roaring. There Kozutopov's Metropole Hotel, the smart place of the village, famed for its solianka dish and its chorus of girls, is preening itself in its red bricks. It was built for the patrons of

the fair and many assemble there to purchase horses. The singers of the chorus are strolling from booth to booth, buying "sugary oranges from Yaroslav," sweet poppy-seed cakes and lime-wood napkin rings. They watch how the people drop down under the ikon.

City folks out for the summer and village dwellers watch also. They seek a place, elevated and dry, from which the whole fair and convent seem to be as on the palm of the hand, and they admire the festivity.

Here strolling painters find for their canvasses the Russian soil-bred gaudiness and peculiar beauty. They love the white convent, piles of carts and white wood, rows of yellow and blue turnips and the splashes of red fustian. Visitors are fond of photographing the folk dropping under the "Inexhaustible Cup." They are trying to grasp the spirit and the coloring of the life. After seeing it all they go to Kozutopov's to eat the famous solianka dish and listen to the

chorus. They crack the nuts, bought in profusion, and munch the turnips. They argue about the obscurity of the plain folks. And few are those who speak with insight.









